
D I B D I N ' S

HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.



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A

COMPLETE HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.

WRITTEN BY

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THE PLAYERS CANNOT KEEP COUNSEL; THEY'LL TELL ALL.

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THE
S T A G E.

BOOK V.

FROM THE BIRTH OF SHAKESPEAR TO THE
DEATH OF ELIZABETH.

CHAP. I.

STATE OF THE STAGE THROUGHOUT EUROPE AT
THE BIRTH OF SHAKESPEAR.

THERE cannot be a clearer truth than that the stage knew nothing of superior merit, in tragedy, from EURIPIDES, and, in comedy, from MENANDER, till SHAKESPEAR. ROME imitated but did not invent, IITALY faintly copied the Romans imitations, SPAIN sketched but could not paint, and FRANCE traced but could not draw. ENGLAND, continually fluctuating under the influence of various fortunes, as customs, manners, and circumstances prevailed, adopted the style of other coun-

tries, and added to theirs no mean degree of native genius; but the efforts were merely THESPIAN and required an ÆSCHYLUS to perfect them.

At the birth of SHAKESPEAR, ITALY had fairly struggled with ENGLAND for pre-eminence in the dramatic art for nearly fifty years; and it cannot be denied that the opposition was very formidable as to talents; for, during the life of LEO the tenth, which some of the critics have distinguished by the pompous title of the Italian Augustan Age, led on by the prelate TRISSINO, and the cardinal BIBIENA, almost the whole of that group of authors who were patronized by LAURENCE of MEDICIS, joined their united labours against BUCKHURST, STILL, and other authors who followed HEYWOOD; and who, by their ingenious and meritorious labours gave the English theatre the first lift towards regularity.

The reader by this statement will at first sight unequivocally decide in favour of ITALY; for when we reflect on the extraordinary merit of the great TASSO, whose *Rinaldo* has been the admiration, and his *Aminta* the delight of the critics; whose *Gierusalemme Liberata* has been pronounced by many writers of taste to be the completest epic poem that ever graced literature; and who, as a philosopher, an orator, a logician, a critic, and a poet

has merited and obtained the warmest praise from the soberest and best informed judges.

When we reflect on the genius and fire of the wonderful ARIOSTO, whose *Orlando Furioso* alone has raised to him a monument of fame on which every admirer of luxuriant fancy and extraordinary strength of mind have, in their warm and spontaneous admiration, added an ornamental laurel; in short, when we consider that these and various other eminent authors, whose abilities were indisputably competent to carry the dramatic art into complete perfection, even at that period were not only the admiration of EUROPE, but candidates for dramatic fame, it should appear even absurd to put the English stage in competition with the Italian.

Nothing, however, can be truer than that, upon a comparison, the Italian drama sunk to annihilation by the side of the English; for, whether these great authors wrote for the stage merely to gratify an eccentric propensity, though it is extremely difficult to conceive how a writer of great genius can feel indifferently while employed so eligibly, or whether they wrote extravagantly, ridiculously, and absurdly, to gratify an extravagant, a ridiculous, and an absurd taste; it is unequivocally certain that the Italian theatre consisted of nothing but the grossest

buffoonery, and sunk into gradual contempt, while the English theatre began at that time to grow refined, and very soon gave visible signs of its attaining that perfection of which it was capable, and to which it was regularly hastening.

One great reason for the decline of the Italian theatre was its shocking impiety; for it never admitted of merely profane subjects, except in operas, which certainly are the only species of dramatic amusement in that country worthy attention; and even these were by no means perfect in their nature till early in the present century, when they found a kind of SHAKESPEAR in METASTASIO.

As to SPAIN, the theatre never, even to this moment, boasted any thing like regularity; spight of the astonishingly fertile genius manifested in the multitudinous productions of the most celebrated authors of that country. In SPAIN, as in ITALY, this may be accounted for by instancing the horrid impiety introduced into their *Autos Sacramentales**,

* In one of these strange pieces the audience are treated with the prospect of a church on fire. A knight is presently discovered, who, full of devotion, rushes into the flames, and at length, having rescued the host from the conflagration, which ought, by the bye, to be invulnerable, returns with it safe and sound in his hand; upon which the rest of the actors accompany him in a fandango.

which in its place I have already given some account of.

Small pieces, however, called *Entremesses*, or *Fornados*, evidently the sirventes and tençons of PROVENCE, and the ancient interludes of ENGLAND, were performed by a few actors, and appear to have been more like regular farces than those exhibited in any other country at so early a period. These, nevertheless, were soon on the decline, and when they were attempted again at the time of CALDERON, they were the most wretched trash that can be imagined.

These trifles, however, served for the groundwork of a better sort of performances; for much about the time of HEYWOOD, they grew into something more considerable, till LOPEZ de RUEDA, and NAVARA, shortly after the birth of SHAKESPEAR, began to shape them into acts and give them a precise length. But these, though they were followed by CERVANTES, whose *Don Quixotte* has immortalized him, and LOPEZ de VEGA with his fifteen hundred plays, both of whom were cotemporary with SHAKESPEAR, never were able, even if we add to theirs the labours of CALDERON, SOLIS, SALAZAR, MOLINA, and many others to

bring the Spanish stage to any thing better than the resemblance of a crowded garden, overrun with weeds and interspersed here and there with flowers of rare and peculiar beauty.

The German theatre, not as I have mixed it before with the Dutch, but properly that theatre established in the principal cities of the empire, boasts a very early origin, a truth which may serve to strengthen those conjectures which have been ventured concerning the antiquity of the English stage.

Ancient GERMANY had its bards, doubtless the Druids, who composed and sung in honour of their heroes; and these are to be traced from a very early period till CHARLEMAGNE. They then began to exercise their profession more decidedly, and were called *Master-Langer*, or Master-Singers. These were protected by various monarchs; and, in particular, received great encouragement from OTHO the Great, and MAXIMILIAN the First.

In consequence of this distinguished countenance, they grew more and more celebrated; and presently MENTZ, STRASBOURG, NUREMBOURG, AUGSBOURG, and other cities boasted their different societies of master-singers, who attended at tournaments, public meetings, and other solemn ceremo-

nies. Not long ago the society of STRASBOURG was in existence and enjoyed certain revenues, established many ages in favour of that company, which was composed of tradesmen, such as taylor, shoemakers, millers, &c.

Thus in these societies of master-singers we have, not only, in the clearest manner, the troubadours and trouverres of PROVENÇE; but in the society of STRASBOURG we have the establishment of the minstrels of CHESTER. We find nothing, however, very celebrated in their productions, nor, till about the middle of the sixteenth century, worth notice; at that time one HAANSSACHS, who had by no means a despicable genius, wrote some dramatic pieces in which he performed himself; but they are, like the pieces of other countries, taken from sacred history, and, therefore, cannot rank as representations of common manners.

The German theatre, however, was not also without pieces on profane subjects, and the authors of these, joined at length by HAANSSACHS, like the Children of Sans Souci in FRANCE, and the interluders in ENGLAND, began to prepare the theatre for the reception of regular tragedies and comedies.

This event, however, did not take place so soon

as in ENGLAND, or in FRANCE; for the German regular theatre owes its origin to the Dutch, and the reader will remember that they had no theatre themselves till 1584. In the year 1626, a company of Dutch players went to HAMBOURG, and from that moment the German theatre altered its manner. The master-fingers were soon routed, a regular company of German actors turned them into contempt and ridicule, from this company sprung several others; and, having the example of ENGLAND, and by this time FRANCE before them, their poets wrote regular tragedies and comedies in tolerably correct verse.

The German tragedies and comedies, however, even to this hour, are clogged with the heaviness and gloom of the Dutch, of which they were originally imitations. Horrible noises, bloody swords, spectres, flaming torches, magic hands, tombs, dungeons, racks, and every other subject to excite terror, pervade their tragedies, one would think to divert the auditor from either sleeping or venting his indignation at their intolerable dullness.

Thus the only nation that held out the shadow of a pretension to dramatic fame, even up to the time when SHAKESPEAR produced his first play, was FRANCE. There, indeed, appeared a dawn of

something like regularity, but it was cold, tame, and obscure; being a Greek and Roman mixture improved by ingredients taken from the English, who had been at the source before them.

LAZARE BAIF, and JODELLE, were the only authors of any consideration who wrote before SHAKESPEAR; GARNIER being his sole rival during the first half of his career, and HARDY during the last, for the great CORNEILLE did not bring out a single play till nine years after the death of our immortal poet, by which time the united labours of SHAKESPEAR, JONSON, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, MASSINGER, RANDOLPH, and the other authors of that time comprizing a mass of dramatic excellence, such as no age nor country has ever produced, passed in review before English spectators.

What then shall we say of the French, who in the same breath boast of having taught ENGLAND the dramatic art, and call CORNEILLE the father of the stage and successor of ÆSCHYLUS, who in point of years might have been SHAKESPEAR'S grandson.

CHAP. II.

SHAKESPEAR.

GREAT and extraordinary objects naturally attract universal attention ; unfortunately, however, human nature is composed of such various and complicate materials, that it is extremely difficult in any case to lift this attention into admiration. The sun that cheers and invigorates us, is a perpetual object of reproach. We feign to sink under those very rays that dispel the mists of contagion, that sweeten the provender for our cattle, that ripen the fruits which pamper our luxury, and that whiten the corn which composes our daily bread. We overlook the beauty, the majesty, the splendor which savages, more faithful to nature, and more ignorant of refinement, make their subject of adoration ; which to enjoy cost us nothing but the trouble of opening our eyes, and the admission of a little heart-felt gratitude. All these incomparable advantages, though essentially material to our very existence, we take to ourselves as

carelessly and indifferently as any other common benefit of nature, without a remark, without thanks, without emotion, while we rack invention to devise a thousand expensive operations to discover spots which in the scale of the universe are perfectly immaterial; and which, but for this restless and insatiable curiosity, would for ever have been hidden from our observation.

SHAKESPEAR whose writings are the offspring of an intuition that mocks description, that shames the schools, and that ascertains sublimity; whose knowledge of human nature was profound, penetrating and infallible; whose morality and philosophy confirm all that was good and wise in the ancients; whose words are in our mouths, and their irresistible influence in our hearts; whose eulogium may be felt but cannot be expressed, and whose own pen alone was equal to the composition of his epitaph: this SHAKESPEAR in the mouths of his fellow creatures is more known for a few inconsiderable blemishes, sprung from redundant fancy and indispenfible conformity, than for innumerable beauties, delightful as truth, and commanding as inspiration.

Look at the various authors who by way of compliment to their own sagacity have deigned so far

to honour biography and literature, as to point out all the blemishes, both as a man and as a writer, of him whose virtue and whose merit were either above their comprehension, or else their tingling envy would not allow them to praise. Do we hear from them a word of his polished manners that made up the delight of the court of ELIZABETH; that laughed EUPHUISM from the circle, and that endeared him to the friends of lord SOUTHAMPTON, and various other patrons? Not a syllable. They just allow that he was a good kind of man, well intentioned, but they never fail, by way of a drawback, to tell you that he was a bungler at wool combing, that he was a notorious deer stealer, and that he turned out a very bad actor.

Have we any author who has had the fair disinterestedness, the noble candour, to indulge himself and gratify the world by any exclusive work that has instanced the various ways in which SHAKESPEAR so greatly commanded all the passions of the soul; in which, with a portraiture full of imagination and faithful as nature, he drew ambition, jealousy, tenderness, piety, villainy, rashness, credulity, licentiousness, and a hundred others with all their shades and gradations? Not one. We have, however, a little myriad of critics and hyper-critics who have done his memory the credit to render his works pro-

fitable to themselves, by making holes as fast as tinkers in his reputation which, they fancy and endeavour to persuade the world they have adroitly mended by patching them up with dross of their own. Well did he say that men's perfections are written in sand their faults in marble.

In my province, I do not consider, if I were ever so inclined, that I have a right to examine the private character of any man, farther than as it may have influenced his public conduct; nor even then, unless it should relate to his connection with the drama. If, by deduction, I can shew that the world has been imposed on by a false character given in favour of any man's works through patronage procured by adulation, meanness, and the fawning arts of a sycophant, it is very fair to place the public and private sentiments of that man by the side of each other, and to appeal to the world, be this or any other the description of his mental blemishes, whether, by that criterion, they have purchased gold or been imposed on by tinsel.

If, on the contrary, I can produce any instances where meekness and modesty have been borne down by rancour and envy, it will be my duty to dwell upon the virtues of him who may have had the pub-

lic misfortune and the private happiness to possess those qualities; nor can I lay a claim to impartiality, the forwardest requisite of a historian, if I neglect in such cases to deduce, from the heart of the man, the merit of the poet.

SHAKESPEAR's genius was so brilliant, his knowledge so wide and universal, his conception so true, and his sentiments so godlike, that to meditate his character is to suppose perfection. Yes, say the cavillers, but his writings are full of faults; and how, as a private man, will he be able to stand or fall upon a comparison with them. Thus quaintness, in complaisance to the time at which he wrote, temporary satire then, perhaps, excellent, now obsolete, and other venial inaccuracies, for it is extremely difficult to call them errors, which we ought not to condemn, or, if we ought, do we easily know how, are quoted to deface his monument of marble, and tortured into as many shapes as envy has snakes, to ornament a sandy heap mistaken by the ignorant for the monument of his commentators.

But as I mean to allot a chapter to an examination of those gentlemen, who would have found it more to their honour to have excelled SHAKESPEAR by the beauty of their own writings, than to have exposed their ignorance in cavilling at his; who

have set about to filtrate air, to elucidate light, and every one of them by a different and constantly an impracticable process; who are like gardeners that cut shrubbery into the forms of birds, pyramids, vases, and other unnatural objects, and call all those fools who love to see nature in her real form, I shall at present content myself with taking first a general, and afterwards a particular view of the writings of SHAKESPEAR, not like a loungeur in the boxes who criticises upon fashions, nor an Aristarchus in the pit who stretches one fault to hide a thousand perfections, but a spectator in the two shilling gallery, who goes to the play to be pleased*.

* I know that in this assertion I have a right to anticipate a great deal of ridicule. It is a compliment, however, of which I am rather covetous. I have heard it frequently argued that education goes for something and I shall have SHAKESPEAR'S own remark turned against me, "that the applause of one of the judicious outweighs "a whole theatre of others." Certainly I am a great advocate for the advantages of education, though real genius requires but little, and in perverse minds, naturally sterile, education generally precludes candour. But education is less necessary in theatrical criticism than in any other. PARTIDGE'S thinking BRANSBY the best actor and giving no merit to GARRICK, because he was frightened at the ghost exactly as he should have been had a ghost appeared to him, is an indelible test of this. The observation was written by a consummate judge of nature, and who, therefore, admired SHAKESPEAR and GARRICK. Education may ascertain the purity of diction, may pry into construction, may find out any violation of the unities, and judge of a poet's blank verse by the number of his dactyls and his spondees; it has, however, very little of the heart, and will be more

The writings of SHAKESPEAR take in so large and so wonderful an extent of compass, that, while we acknowledge that he wrote better, we are obliged to add that he wrote more than any other dramatic writer. One voluminous author writes tragedies for which he is deservedly celebrated, that after all contain only the representations of a few passions placed in different points of view; another, equally voluminous, writes comedies, with the same just right to celebration, in which a few follies and absurdities are properly ridiculed; SHAKESPEAR goes infinitely beyond all this. He takes the whole round of the passions, bends them into every form in which they ought deservedly to be exhibited, exposes them to contempt, holds them up to ridicule, commands for them admiration, conciliates pity, excites terror, and in short displays, in his

likely to suppress than to stimulate tears and smiles. A play is, or ought to be, a representation of nature, of which every spectator is, as far as his understanding permits, a judge. Judgement then, not education, is the critical quality, which is less likely to be perverted without than with education; and the deduction fairly is, that he who sits in a theatre determined to let whatever passes before him have its full effect on his passions without reserve or abatement, is a fairer and therefore a better theatrical critic than he who weighs every thing in the balance of consideration, and while he pauses on the discovery of a few blemishes, loses sight of a number of beauties. The spectator in the two shilling gallery then seems best to answer this description, and it will be difficult to find an argument to prove that in this acceptation SHAKESPEAR did not use the word judicious.

Faithful portraiture of them, every effect that can unlock the anxious mind, or gratify the susceptible fancy; and, when satisfied with exploring and laying open to view the motley group of affections that characterize nature in the beings of this world, he stretches his comprehensive imagination and invents a new world, inhabited with beings the offspring of his own fancy, who in their allegorical character give a refinement to virtue, an aversion to vice, and a ridicule to folly, which no actual representation of them could have had the force or the beauty to convey.

Thus SHAKESPEAR, by having left nothing unrepresented either as a positive and naked exhibition of nature, or a deduced and figurative description of her, has gone unequivocally beyond all other writers; and were there nothing else to sanction his astonishing merit and extend his wide fame, he would yet indisputably stand above all dramatic authors ancient and modern.

But, when we consider that there had been no school in which he might study this art, that no dramatic writer since *ÆSCHYLUS*, whose soul seems as if it had transmigrated till it was born anew in SHAKESPEAR, had been equal to the meritorious task of restoring the glare of *MELPOMENE*'s dagger

and perfecting the polish on the mirror of THALIA; when we consider that the theatre in ten years, in the hands of SHAKESPEAR, attained all that perfection which it had lost for more than two thousand, and boasted additional perfection never known to it before in the course of the world, it is impossible to contemplate the character of this great man with a degree of wonder equal to its value, which I consider as the highest climax of panegyric; and yet these considerations are never afforded, and all we can learn from writers, whose geniuses would be complimented by the possession of a capacity to comprehend the genius of SHAKESPEAR, gives us no more than permission to assert, that he was an extraordinary man, when it was admitted that he had received but an indifferent education, and that, though there were passages in his works of great and wonderful beauty, there were, nevertheless, numerous faults which never ought to be permitted.

As to the faults, I shall speak of them more particularly hereafter, when I think it will not be very difficult to prove that they are not so numerous not of such magnitude as the world is taught to believe by the critics; I do not care much what they themselves believe on the subject, though I hope for the sake of common sense and their own reputation, they do not believe half they assert; as

to the beauties, they are too indelibly impressed on the heart of every one who has heard or read them to need explanation.

But a few words as to the education of SHAKESPEAR, for though I am not writing his life I have a great pride in being the historian of his mind. He received the common advantages of learning in what is called a grammar school; that is to say, a place where a boy of any tolerable genius may learn all that the master is capable of teaching him in six months, and where boys in general study for years and at last know nothing.

Whether SHAKESPEAR learned little or much at this school makes nothing either for or against my argument. I can very willingly suppose that the scholar was very soon able to teach the master. It was not in this grammar school where he received that education which has wrought his celebrity. It was in the school of nature, who condescended to be his instructress. The lady fell in love with him; was captivated; he was her ADONIS, her ENDYMION, and both her beauty and her chastity yielded to the irresistible impulse; while he, with all the gallantry, yet the delicacy of an honourable lover, and a faithful knight, consecrated his life to the service

of his mistress, pleaded her cause, redressed her wrongs, and, with the truest constancy and most ardent gratitude, made her beauty the perpetual theme of his panegyric.

If *ÆSCHYLUS*, when, *GOD* knows, grammar schools had nothing to do with learning, but when men were called wise because they used first so many words as served simply to express such ideas as nature taught them, and good, because their minds adopted no ideas but what tended to promote general morality: if *ÆSCHYLUS*, studying in the school of nature, represented the great actions and glorious achievements of his countrymen, and felt emulously and meritoriously that by that means he should render *GREECE* and human nature a benefit, why should we deny the same merit to *SHAKESPEAR* more than two thousand years afterwards, when grammar schools actually flourished. But it would wrong my cause to waste too much anxiety about it; and nothing but a necessity for strong and incontrovertible argument to cope with the opinions of men, certainly great and reputable, except in their charitable warning to the world of faults in another which are not yet, however, generally discovered, and, after all, not of the magnitude of their own, would have induced me to dwell so

minutely on a theme that, with men of fair and candid discrimination, recommends itself and speaks its own eulogium.

The general merit of SHAKESPEAR manifests itself in a thousand various ways. Take any one of the passions which he has moulded at will to serve the general purpose of instruction and amusement, and see to what an astonishing pitch he has affected the human heart by a critical and interesting display of it.

Is the passion love? See how he has followed it through all its vicissitudes. The delicate tenderness, the fond impatience, the impetuous ardour, the noble constancy of ROMEO and JULIET, perhaps, has not a parallel in language. To youthful love every thing is possible; and the exquisite nonsense that SHAKESPEAR has put into the mouth of the doating, enamoured, yet delicate JULIET, is full of poetic beauty, so boundlessly, so extravagant, and yet so truly natural, that we are equally captivated with her love and her innocence.

The love of ROMEO is no less admirably drawn,
It is impetuous, thoughtless, and rash, yet manly,

noble, and generous; but its characteristic is nature, He leaps the orchard wall and braves the resentment of JULIET's relations, out of love, yet presently, out of this very love, he becomes a coward and puts up with an insult from those relations; nor is he roused out of this apathy till called upon to revenge the death of his friend.

In the garden scene, surely nothing can be so beautiful as the enchanted, yet respectful, manner in which he listens to the unaffected tenderness, the timid honesty, the techy impatience of JULIET. His love, profound, and awful, recedes from his tongue to his heart; her's, inconsiderate and volatile, flies from her heart to her tongue, till, at length impelled to reply to her fond confession, which disdains all hypocrisy, and derides all subterfuge, they join in interchanging vows, tender and affectionate on her part, manly and honourable on his.

Absence only renders more amiable the noble and exalted minds of those lovers. His despair at hearing the sentence of banishment, his horror at the news of JULIET's death, and his solemn determination to follow her; and her resigned compliance with the friar's stratagem, her awful manner of executing it, and her destroying herself, after every

hope has failed her, are masterly pictures of exquisite love *.

* **MERCIER** was so charmed with **ROMEO** and **JULIET**, and so distressed that the lovers should become victims to the unjust and unreasonable enmity of their families, that he has given the plot a new turn. The play never was performed, but it has all the delicacy, finesse, and truth of that admirable author. **BENVOLIO**, having long foreseen the consequence of this family hatred, does his utmost to excite the love of **ROMEO** and **JULIET**, in order to bring about a reconciliation. He finds both the families averse to his project, and, therefore, connives at a private marriage. Every thing happens as in **SHAKESPEAR**'s play. **BENVOLIO**, however, in the place of the friar, having from his infancy studied chemistry, administers a potion to **JULIET**; and, contriving that **ROMEO** should be informed of the death, furnishes him with another. **ROMEO** opens the tomb and finding **JULIET** apparently dead, drinks the potion and falls down at her side. In the mean, **BENVOLIO** having alarmed the two fathers they presently behold their two children in this state. After reading to them a severe lecture, and reproaching them for their conduct and the dreadful consequences of their mutual enmity, he honestly confesses that he has wrought all this; tells them that this seeming death of these lovers is but a sleep; that he alone, however, knows the charm to revive them; and that, if they will discard their unjust anger and vow perpetual amity, their children shall wake and revive the double pleasure of being restored to life and to the arms of their parents; but that, if they hesitate, it will be too late. In that case he knows he shall be considered as their murderer, but that he would rather die than witness a rancour so dishonourable to themselves and such a scandal to human nature. The result is obvious. The lovers revive, and their affection is crowned with the approbation and blessing of their fathers. I shall only add that the Frenchman merely alters the story; he does not attempt to improve

Were I to go on investigating the various ways in which SHAKESPEAR has treated this one passion, I should greatly exceed the limits I am obliged to prescribe for myself. I shall, therefore, for the present pass by the noble and persevering constancy of IMOGEN, the patient and endearing tenderness of DESDEMONA, the generous and enterprizing affection of ROSALIND, the silent and devouring passion of VIOLA, and all those great and unexampled proofs of consummate strength of mind and profound judgment of the human heart in which SHAKESPEAR, though he may have been in one instance now and then equalled by a particular author, taking his writings on the passion of love in their full and comprehensive sense, he has clearly excelled every author.

But let us instance this passion further, together with jealousy and the other branches of it, as well as all those different affections of the mind, which he bared to the sight and penetrated with a critical nicety that always appealed directly to the heart, by an examination of his different works; in which,

upon SHAKESPEAR, whose genius he reverences, and to whose productions he had upon all occasions most willingly paid a warm tribute of admiration.

that I may get into no controversy about a matter perfectly immaterial to the reputation of SHAKESPEAR, or the information of the world, I shall suppose his plays to have been written in that chronological order which is generally admitted to be correct; though I cannot help confessing that I have seen no authority by which I am convinced that it is so.

CHAP. III.

SHAKESPEAR's PLAYS.

Titus Andronicus is said by the regulation before alluded to to have been SHAKESPEAR's first play, and printed in 1611, but performed in 1589*. All this may be possible, but the general accounts of it say

* To shew how easy it is to cavil, I shall instance a circumstance here, which, though of so little moment that to mention it as a thing of consequence would be almost as absurd as to get involved in the cobweb enquiries of his commentators, will shew that it is impossible that SHAKESPEAR's first play could have been produced in 1589; for in that very year in the mayoralty of HART, a thing extremely easy to ascertain, players of all descriptions were absolutely put down upon the application of that magistrate to the lord treasurer. We see, however, that immediately after that year, playhouses were created as by magic; and, as there can be no doubt, but all this arose from the extraordinary and unexpected excellence of the writings of SHAKESPEAR, it is more proper, though it is a pityful contention, to fix the appearance of his first play one year, if not two years later. In which case what becomes of that authority, which though I cannot bow to, I shall adopt, merely because a year sooner or later in the production of a thing will not alter the sterling merit of the thing itself.

that it was performed in 1594, by the servants of lord PEMBROKE, lord DERBY, and lord ESSEX. Much has been said to prove that this play was not written by our great poet; the arguments, however, to prove this are rather nugatory. RAVENSCROFT, who altered it and called it a tragedy of his own, might very naturally have had personal reasons for inducing the world to think that it was not SHAKESPEAR'S; but his argument, that it was brought to the theatre and touched up by SHAKESPEAR, is too ridiculous, for he was at that time only an actor and could not have taken the manager upon him to this degree.

If those who reject this play as SHAKESPEAR'S think it inferior to the rest of his productions, the doubt is easily cleared by recollecting that it was his first effort. There are certainly some things in it equal to his happiest fallies; and, as we know those are superior to the writings of any man who ever lived, the question to be asked is, and this will perpetually occur, if SHAKESPEAR did not write *Titus Andronicus*, who did?

THEOBALD, who after all is the most pardonable of all SHAKESPEAR'S commentators, has taken this play into his edition as genuine; and, notwithstanding this opinion of his has been lustily combated by

later conjecture, that, backed by the strong writings, the discrimination of character, and those peculiar marks of genius which were worn so indelibly by SHAKESPEAR, and which appear, not always, but very frequently in this play, I shall not hesitate to believe, and therefore assert that it is written by that great man with whom nature, a proud distinction, complimented this country.

Love's Labour Lost, performed, at least we will so conclude, in 1591, has, as well as *Titus Andronicus*, been rejected as a genuine play of SHAKESPEAR. The cabal against it, however, has not run so high, and, therefore, all his editors, poor SHAKESPEAR, Oh that admiration and pity should belong to the same man! have concurred right or wrong to admit it into their collections.

As *Titus Andronicus* was SHAKESPEAR'S first tragedy, so *Love's Labour Lost* was his first comedy, and thus the whole mystery appears to be solved. These plays are full of irregularities owing clearly to the inexperience of the author, the prejudices he had to combat, and the taste he had to create. When HERCULES cleared the Augean stable it was very unlikely that he came out clean himself. Why will not men be candid? Why not say at once that it is not in nature to attain perfection in a moment, if at

all. If they would lament instead of condemn, and extol instead of commend, it would be the true criticism due to SHAKESPEAR.

Love's Labour Lost abounds with beauties. The character of BIRON, considered as so early an effort, is inimitable. The admirable brilliancy which pervades the dialogue has no fault but playful redundancy, and though it has been objected to, by Dr. JOHNSON, as obscene and vulgar, and improper to have been performed before a maiden queen, who, by the way, had been accustomed to listen to much worse obscenity and vulgarity, for the obscenity of SHAKESPEAR is purity compared to those who wrote before him, yet this great admirer of truth and sentiment is compelled to allow that there is no play "that has more evident marks of the hand of SHAKESPEAR."

In the same year, SHAKESPEAR is said to have produced the first part of *Henry the Sixth*, and in the following year the second and third parts of the same play; and, as there is a continuation of the story of that unhappy prince, I shall consider them under one head.

SHAKESPEAR had hitherto indulged his pro-

penalty for dramatic writing by treating subjects with which his principles as a patriot were not concerned. He had only consulted his feelings as a poet. If from design, the election was judicious; if from impulse, nature was working in him that maturity necessary to achieve the great designs she was meditating for him, for now the time arrived when he was destined to prove himself the English *ÆSCHYLUS*; when the fancied prowess of foreign or imaginary heroes was to yield to the actual exploits of his own countrymen; to be handed down by him as a faithful record of all the virtues and vices of the English nation for the imitation or abhorrence of posterity.

No pen but that of SHAKESPEAR was competent to undertake this masterly task. To become the dramatic historian of his own country became peculiarly his province, and there are more traits of real history at this moment remembered by the English through the medium of his plays than all that library of contradiction and absurdity, which, as an ingenious author says, "some have been facetiously pleased to call *The History of England*."

These three plays contain most wonderful proofs of SHAKESPEAR'S great and extraordinary genius. The characters are drawn with correct truth and

prodigious force. The timid HENRY led about by his turbulent queen, the bold WARWICK, the subtle GLOUCESTER, whose different ambitions and the means of attaining their end exhibit a most commanding and masterly judgment in the manner of throwing over that passion the different shadows necessary to relieve it, are so many confirmations of his grasping at all minds and at all motives.

The philosophy and resignation of HENRY is uncommonly admirable. The distinction between goodness and greatness, one the perfection of nature and an emulation of the deity; the other a mixture of artificial wants interwoven into our desires and actions by restless and ambitious struggles for superiority, are exhibited masterly and happily in the contrast between HENRY and MARGARET, both of whom are in nature and yet both out of their sphere. If SHAKESPEAR had written nothing but that wonderful soliloquy uttered by the timid HENRY, while he sits upon the hill contemplating the dreadful effects of that battle he has not the courage to witness, posterity would have pointed out the page as a master piece of beauty and sublimity.

But to dwell upon the separate merits of these

plays would be to write a treatise instead of a history. It would require an examination into all those nice points of discrimination in which nature taught SHAKESPEAR to develop the motives of the human heart. I shall content myself, therefore, with noticing that SHAKESPEAR having thus far shewn in what way the affections of the mind may be meritoriously wrought on to stimulate men to good and great actions, and instanced these truths by portraying manners at home, the stage began to grow important, the characters in common life as well as those of kings and heroes became familiar by passing in review, and the conduct of mankind imbibed new dignity from an attention to the lessons of SHAKESPEAR.

Pericles was, as we are told, performed in 1592. It would be as difficult to pronounce that this play was wholly written by SHAKESPEAR as that it was not. That he had not a hand in it, or, as HEYWOOD calls it, at least a main finger will hardly be asserted for it has those marks of peculiar felicity which I cannot think any mind enjoyed in the same degree as that of SHAKESPEAR; but, as it is more natural that he should assist the labours of another than condescend to permit another to assist him, and, as at the time of *Pericles* there is not the same excuse

of inexperience as at the time of *Titus Andronicus*, it is certainly feasible to join with the major part of those who have been so solicitous to establish a fact, not, however, very material, and allow that the opinion that *Pericles* is not entirely the production of SHAKESPEAR has certainly probability on its side *.

Loerine produced in 1593, has still fewer pretensions to be considered as a genuine play of SHAKESPEAR than *Pericles*. Indeed it has scarcely any vestiges by which it appears to have the advantages of his assistance; some, however, there certainly are, for in the edition of it, published in 1595, the title announces that it was "overseen and corrected by WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR," and this very unaffectedly establishes a proof that it must have been the production of some author of that

* There is one way of reconciling the mind to a belief of SHAKESPEAR'S having produced this play without the assistance of any author then living. The story is very ancient and had been treated frequently before, and it is possible, especially as it must have been very hastily written, SHAKESPEAR having in the same year brought forward his second and third parts of *Henry the Sixth*, that he merely dramatized the story from one or more of its historians; and by throwing in his own excellent ingredients, gave it in some measure that peculiar relish so delicious to the taste of those who love to banquet the mind with the wholesome and nutritious food, furnished by nature and prepared by reason.

time who was glad enough to benefit himself by such able assistance.

The two Gentlemen of Verona made its appearance in the same year. This piece displays a prodigious variety of those beauties which belonged only to SHAKESPEAR. The plot, which is taken from a novel, as far as it relates to the management of the scenery is certainly very intricate and almost inexplicable, but considered merely as a story, it has great simplicity and nature. The characters are drawn with strength and truth, and it is remarkable that in this play we have the first idea of what has been since called genteel comedy. The elegance, yet the contrast in VALENTINE and PROTHEUS, is a very striking picture, not only of the etiquette, but the perfidy of polite life; for PROTHEUS is more corrupted by education than nature, of which his remorse and his contrition are proofs, while VALENTINE has a mind so correctly inclined to rectitude that fashion and folly cannot corrupt it.

But this is not all. The two servants, LAUNCE and SPEED, who are the foils of their masters, make the whole a complete resemblance of that sort of play which is the foundation of almost all the comedies of both the Spaniards and the French; and as these plays did not obtain with them, at least in this

perfect form, till CALDERON, who was cotemporary with CORNEILLE, SHAKESPEAR may be said to have been the founder of this species of comedy. We must admit at the same time that the germ was in the Spaniards, but his mind was the only soil which could expand and bring it to perfection.

The chronological order, which I pursue right or wrong in this account of SHAKESPEAR'S productions, even if it should be deficient in veracity, has certainly the appearance of good sense in its favour, for it seems to lay before the reader that sort of rotation in which a well wisher to his reputation would desire that he had written them. The redundant luxuriance, in which, in the wilds of SHAKESPEAR'S abundant and productive imagination, one cannot sometimes see the wood for trees, begins as he goes on to be more and more got under. The underwood is better cleared out and the plants, intended to swell and enlarge, have more room and better air to accelerate their approach to maturity.

The two Gentlemen of Verona abounds with poetical beauties such as we have not before been able to discover even in SHAKESPEAR. His towering fancy in this particular piece playfully ascends to those sublime heights, dangerous to others but

always familiar to him; sometimes hazardous, but never alarming; often trackless, yet always astonishing.

The Winter's Tale was performed in 1594. When the grand objection in this play is got over which is the very long period of time it embraces, and the different countries it traverses, we turn our thoughts to the numerous and inimitable beauties it contains; which, whether considered on the side of character or language, are in the best style of SHAKESPEAR. This play has been very judiciously separated into two dramatic pieces; and, viewed in this advantageous light, it has very few faults of any description. The subject of that which GARRICK brought forward as a tragedy in three acts under its original title, and in which, to do him justice, he sacredly steered clear of mutilation, as he did also in his alteration of *Romeo and Juliet*, is great, natural, and affecting.

Jealousy, of which turbulent passion SHAKESPEAR has so often evinced a most critical judgment, for he has always given it a different motive and a different discrimination, is most pathetically depicted in the character of LEONTES, and gives a lively and noble opportunity of bringing forward contrast, the life of the drama, by the

honourable and conscious rectitude in the justification of HERMIONE. The loves of FLORIZEL and PERDITA, which form the other piece, are so simple, so pastoral, so tender, and so delicate, that their force and their language are the description of an amiable and meritorious passion, belonging to all ranks, and equally a blessing to the peasant and the prince. In short, love and its vicissitudes mark the various merits of this admirable piece, which SHAKESPEAR, here as every where else, has explored at will, and turned to advantage at pleasure.

A Midsummer's Night's Dream came out in 1595, SHAKESPEAR, having ranged so far through the fields of nature, began now to feel an inclination to explore the regions of fancy; which he did to so good a purpose, that all the critics, even the most sarcastic, have agreed, that in this wild and beautiful play, if the fairies do not speak the language of common nature no one can pronounce that they do not speak their own.

Every writer, equal to the task, compliments his country by displaying all the poetic fare of which his genius is capable. Here has SHAKESPEAR in one instance paid his country this compliment. Common tradition had fanciliarized the idea of

fairies, and many a ballad and poem had made them the lares of the English. His fertile and creative fancy, therefore could not, to shew its extent and variety, have been better employed. SPENSER had trod the ground before him, with prodigious felicity and sterling excellence; but SHAKESPEAR, born to soar above all others, represented what his great predecessor only narrated.

We come now to consider SHAKESPEAR every moment in a superior light, for great and admirable as his talents have hitherto appeared, they are yet growing considerably into much more strength and improvement.

Romeo and Juliet his next play, which was produced also in 1595, is a wonderful performance; and how we can possibly understand that, so soon after his mind had been entangled in the labyrinths of enchantment, and his fancy frolicking over the imaginary beauties of Fairy land, he could calmly set down exquisitely to describe literal nature, will be difficult, if not impossible.

This play, which is founded on real history, is so constantly in the mouths of its various spectators and readers that to describe particularly the tenderness of the lovers, the rooted animosity of their

parents, the different effects of resentment in their relations, in short, the piety of the Friar, the loquacity of the Nurse, the wit of MERCUTIO, or those other points that constitute its beauty and make up its collective merit is certainly unnecessary ; but, as every opportunity of paying a tribute of respect to the admirable genius of its incomparable author is with me irresistible, I shall speak of some things which have not probably yet been noticed.

Romeo and Juliet is best known by that copy of it which is generally performed, and in which GARRICK has very judiciously done little more than make SHAKESPEAR alter his own play, fitting the catastrophe to the original invention of the novelist. The two grand points that GARRICK, by the advice of his friends, has insisted on, are the expunging the idea of ROSALIND, and ROMEO's sudden inconstancy on the first impression of JULIET's superior beauty, and heightening the catastrophe, by ROMEO's first swallowing the poison, then in the ecstasy of finding JULIET survive, forgetting the desperate act he had committed, and flattering himself with a delusive hope of future happiness, and, again, the astonishment and delight of JULIET at recovering her lover, all which is instantly damped by a discovery that her fallacious hopes are to be but momentary.

It must be confessed these alterations are more admissible by common auditors, than the incidents as they originally stood; not that they were forced or unnatural before, for violent love breeds with it inconstancy, because it is always inconsiderate, or, as JULIET sweetly expresses it,

too rash, too unadvised,
Too like the lightening, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say it lightens,

But this does not seem to be all that SHAKESPEAR intended in ROMEO's amorous apostacy. He has appeared to insist upon this incident to give an awful grandeur to his plot, the great drift of which is, and this has been but little considered, the solemn warning to MONTAGUE and CAPULET, by the dreadful sacrifice of their children, and in them to all other parents, of the horrid effects of domestic enmity.

To bring about this great and important end, is ROMEO made inconstant; is JULIET, who had been taught all her life to hate the MONTAGUES, made as suddenly to fall in love with her mortal enemy; or, as she describes it, her only love sprung from her only hate. These circumstances discover a depth, a solidity of which SHAKESPEAR is oftener capable than suspected. This love, so

born, he contrives with the pen of a poet and the hand of a master, in various ways and by various degrees, to warm and encourage, till he makes even the Friar consent to the union of the lovers, which it was positively his duty not to do, from a reflection that Providence, from this fortunate event, might so open the eyes of the parents to the folly and injustice of their mutual and long-existing animosity, “to turn their houses’ rancour to pure love.”

This very catastrophe has even been attempted, but never with success, for it could not be so impressive nor so tragic. I have shewn in the plot of *MERCIER* of how much it is capable, but *SHAKESPEAR* did not look so superficially. Meritorious punishment has been clearly with him his decided drift. Even the lovers tender, delicate, and honourable as they are, merit punishment; for their conduct is thoughtlessly a deviation from the very principles they profess; it is born of imprudence, and nursed by deceit; and, in this point of view, it is better that *ROMEO* should have been inconstant, and *JULIET* at least capricious.

Nay, the imprudence of the Friar, with all his wisdom and sagacity, is most admirably thrown in. Having in one instance, from the best motives in the world, done a positive wrong he is obliged to

persist, still comforting himself with the purity of his intentions. He becomes the honourable pander of the lovers, he leagues with a chattering and perfidious servant, whose honesty he fears, and whose servility he ought to distrust. Instead of wisely attempting to apply a solid remedy, instead of manfully stepping forward and avowing the marriage of **ROMEO** and **JULIET**, at the moment she is menaced with the hand of **PARIS**, and attempting, through the mediation of the Prince, to bring about a reconciliation between the two families; he, timid, irresolute, and one would almost think vain of his judgment in the conduct of intrigue, advises a desperate and unwise means, not to bring about any wished for end, but to procrastinate and put off the evil day at the hazard of accumulated mischief.

The sum of his danger is by this time so ascertained that he has cut off his own retreat. He, therefore, makes another confidant in Friar **JOHN**, employs him to carry a letter, which miscarrying, he seizes his iron crow and romantically undertakes himself to release **JULIET** from the vault of her ancestors. All this folly is he guilty of, and yet you pity and almost admire him from beginning to end; but remember it is impossible to commend him, and this is the nice distinction **SHAKESPEAR**

has so well drawn; pointing out, that in the best and the wisest, a single deviation from the path of rectitude must lead to remorse and may, perhaps, to punishment.

As to the character of MERCUTIO, concerning which so much has been said and written, SHAKESPEAR has certainly introduced it to give fresh force to the colouring his main design. He represents this young officer as an elegant man, a complete gentleman, and an accomplished wit, and that the characters in the play, and the spectators at it, may look with additional horror at the family disputes of the MONTAGUES and the CAPULETS, he is lost, to one, at a time of life when his brilliant talents and engaging manners are at their height, and, therefore, ardently cherished by his friends, and, to the other, at the moment he has become their delight and admiration.

In the face of DRYDEN, whose great talents I shall have hereafter plenty of opportunity to shew how sincerely I reverence, I look upon this to have been SHAKESPEAR'S sole motive for killing MERCUTIO so early in the play. It had been said by the critics that SHAKESPEAR had so surpassed his own expectation in the character of MERCUTIO that he killed him in the third act, lest, had he con-

tinued him, he should have been killed by him; and this DRYDEN has affected to smile at, under an idea that he was "no such formidable person, for that he might have lived through the play and died in his bed without any danger to a poet."

This tradition, and this declaration are equally wrong. The trait of MERCUTIO's death, in the manner we witness it, is, for the reasons I have given above, a most affecting circumstance, and that SHAKESPEAR could not have carried on this character to the end of ten plays with the same force and spirit is ridiculous to assert. On the other hand; that DRYDEN, who was all candour and full of judgment, should think so indifferently of the wit of MERCUTIO, is not very easily understood, even with Dr. JOHNSON's mode of accounting for it, who says that, in this remark, "DRYDEN was not in quest of truth," and that "the fallies of MERCUTIO were beyond his reach," for no man searched more after truth than DRYDEN, and he has given sufficient proof in his own admirable writings that the higher the fallies of any wit were elevated they would the more easily come in contact with his genius.

But to put aside the curious question of whether or not SHAKESPEAR created a personage and

then was so terrified at his formidable appearance, that he watched an opportunity and gave him an unlucky blow under ROMEO's arm for fear of worse consequences to himself; that great judge of nature, who violated propriety much seldomer than has been generally admitted, had a motive for bringing about this premature death which does not seem to have been noticed.

ROMEO, having killed TIBALT, it would have been manifest injustice in the Duke not to have taken "the forfeit life of ROMEO" had he not qualified his sentence of banishment with describing TIBALT's crime to have been worse than ROMEO's. SHAKESPEAR, therefore, makes MERCUTIO the Duke's relation; "who, as his blood had issued "from MERCUTIO's wounds," whose life ROMEO endeavoured to save, sees the crime in a much more heinous light in TIBALT than in ROMEO, and, therefore, when MONTAGUE pleads for his son saying that "he but took the forfeit life of TIBALT," the discrimination of banishment is correctly consistent. Thus in perfect consonance to dramatic construction, a subordinate character is disposed of to give better opportunity of keeping a principal character in the fore ground; and this I believe is a rational way of accounting for this mighty circum-

stance which has created so much cavil than to suppose, admirable as the character of MERCUTIO is, that SHAKESPEAR was at all afraid of continuing it to the end with encreased warmth, had propriety warranted this necessity.

Before we leave *Romeo and Juliet*, we must not forget to notice the Nurse; a sort of character in which SHAKESPEAR took particular delight, because he delighted in every thing that was natural. He has made this talkative old woman full of self importance, and, therefore, she is permitted to take liberties which no other description of servants would dare to do; but having given her all the low and corrupted cunning of a thorough paced mercenary domestic, from her own depravity of mind and liquorish vanity, she endeavours to seduce that beauty and innocence which is the constant theme of her praise; and having persuaded her into something more than imprudence in her marriage with ROMEO, to avert the consequences, she does not hesitate to devise an infamous method of compounding the business by her marriage, nevertheless, with PARIS.

Thus she is possessed of cunning which is counteracted by her ignorance, thus she insinuates herself into the secrets of her young lady to gain over

her an insolent ascendancy, and thus, a stranger to the gratitude due to her benefactors, she abuses that indulgence, and betrays that confidence of which they themselves ought to have known her unworthy.

There cannot be a properer lesson to parents and children than this. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the various instances of family misery happen through the improper confidence placed in servants; and thus SHAKESPEAR has made this nurse, who after all may be in great measure excused on the score of pampered indulgence which she ignorantly takes to herself as her right, and implicit reliance which gives her a reprehensible importance, an instrument to shew by what natural degrees the smallest neglect of prudence in parents may produce the most fatal consequences to their children, and how a deviation of prudence in children may prove a source of misery and regret to their parents.

Thus it is impossible to blame any thing in the conduct or construction of this play. It is in vain to say that tragedy and comedy are unnaturally blended together, for the reverse is the fact. The story is purely domestic; and familiar circumstances, however productive in the end of distress and misery, ought not to be treated otherwise than as SHAKES-

PEAR has treated them; nay, in this play particularly, he has managed the comic part with a most happy judgment; for, as the play advances and the interest it is intended to create becomes more and more important, the comic characters drop off and leave the mind at leisure, without mixture or interruption, to attend to the plot as it approaches to, perhaps, the most interesting catastrophe ever represented to an audience; and here we have another proof of the great propriety of SHAKESPEAR'S killing MERCUTIO in the third act.

The Comedy of Errors was produced the year after *Romeo and Juliet*. The objections that have been made to this play are that it outrages probability, that the mistakes are repeated till they tire, and that the catastrophe is foreseen in the first act.

Certainly probability is a good deal stretched at the idea that the Twin Masters and the Twin Servants should be so remarkably alike, and this is all, for it is clearly possible, and if the audience were only presented with one of those gemini no man could have cavilled at it, I am glad, however, that SHAKESPEAR gave us two, though not strictly within the bounds of propriety, for the abundant opportunity it has given him of indulging that true vein of comic humour he possessed in such an ex-

traordinary degree overcomes, liberally taken, all objection.

The mistakes are very frequently repeated, and at length they as certainly tire, but this is more owing to the impossibility of properly representing the play than the want of variety in its author. Could we get two Antipoluses and two Dromios exactly alike, the audience, would be equally deceived with the characters and the equivoque would be complete,

As to the anticipation of the catastrophe, my objection is not so strong to that as that the catastrophe itself is a kind of vehicle, a kind of underpart, to set off the detached scenes. But I do not much in the present case mind this. I know of eminent painters who are best known by their sketches. Let us, therefore, consider *The Comedy of Errors*, though by the way there is a wonderful deal of fine pencelling in it, as a sketch; and let us not, because every thing that comes from the hand of a great master cannot always be perfect, criticise ourselves, in our examination of this play, out of the irresistible pleasure it constantly affords us both on the stage and in the closet.

If the objections of the critics to *The Comedy*

of Errors require so strong a defence, what must be the critical fate of *Hamlet*? Which, with all its transcendant beauties, its prodigious strength, its fascinating charms, its rivetting interest, and its extraordinary variety, has more faults than the critics have time to tell, or breath to give utterance.

Hamlet was brought out in 1596; and, when we consider that this wonderful production, worth the reputation of twenty celebrated authors, and I should not be fearful of naming them, was written, together with the four last plays we have received, in two years, what words can the best ingenuity supply us with equal to the description of the astonishing talents of this incomparable writer!

I know not if the objections to this play excite most one's pity or one's indignation. I'll admit at once all the faults; but justice, truth, common sense forbid, that this mist of faults should obscure, in any liberal mind, the splendour they are ignorantly said to hide. I'll admit the tardiness of HAMLET, I'll admit that the Ghost is not revenged because the instrument of the revenge falls in accomplishing the death of the adulterer, and the murderer; I'll admit that the death of the unoffending OPHELIA is revolting and unnecessary; that the amiable LAERTES, practising against the life of HAM-

LET by the treachery, is unbecoming, and even ignoble.

I will even admit with Mr. VOLTAIRE, who abused this play and afterwards stole it, that the grave diggers ought not to jest in the parish churchyard of the palace, as he is pleased to call it; that a little curiosity in POLLONIUS was not a crime of magnitude enough to deserve death; and that the King certainly bids the cannon sound before the invention of gunpowder. I'll admit all these foils that the diamond may appear more brilliant; but, when I have done so, will the fourest critic who has malignantly enjoyed this discovery lay his hand on his heart, nay, would VOLTAIRE himself with his hundred and twenty volumes, were he alive, and say that he would not rather be known by the tragedy of *Hamlet* alone, with all its faults, than his own productions, with all their perfections.

I will not undertake to say, in a general sense, that this is a fair way of arguing. Have the faults or perfections of other men any thing to do with this particular object of discussion? And, if I admit they exist, how can I who profess myself a warm admirer of SHAKESPEAR, for as to an advocate he needs none, get rid of an established fact? I do not want to get rid of it. I even blazoned it here

to shew its insignificance ; to shew how much oftener it has been mentioned than it ought, and how greatly it has been magnified, when the other fact, one would think more worthy their attention as candid and sound critics, of the innumerable and exquisite beauties this faulty piece contains, obtains their acknowledgment in so painful and laboured a manner that every extorted confession gives them a heart burn, and chokes their faint praise in its utterance.

Perhaps these gentlemen were charitable enough to notice the blemishes of SHAKESPEAR because an enumeration of his perfections was unnecessary. It must be so ; for, otherwise, what a stain to their truth, and what a drawback on their reputation it must have been that, while men of competent talents, the lawgivers of literature pass over such excellence, it would be known, felt, and understood, by every other man in the kingdom, however illiterate. Let us then imitate their charity, and suppose this to be the case ; and then a criterion will be established, rather an Irish one to be sure, that that the best way of finding out a man's merit is to search for his defects.

For my own part, I am so content to take things as find them ; and, have so much pleasure in repeating over and over again what I like, that against

all present, I shall not scruple to revive in my mind, by an examination of *Hamlet*, that delight I have so frequently and so warmly enjoyed. All men agree on the value of a guinea, the beauty of a fine day, the odour of a rose; nor does a repetition of the enjoyment resulting from their admiration abate, for it rather encreases the grateful satisfaction. Upon this principle I shall undertake a very welcome task; nor shall I, because my guinea may be a little short of weight, my day obscured by a passing cloud, or my rose armed with a few thorns, deduct from the real value of either, but fairly revel in all the pleasures their best qualities are capable of affording me.

In the conduct of *Hamlet*, SHAKESPEAR seems more to have treated a subject than to have constructed a play. Nothing can be finer, more moral, more interesting than the general design, and, in the choice of it, is evinced a great mind, a strong discrimination, and a correct classical judgment. The ground work is that first of all moral obligations, filial piety, and the feelings belonging to that passion, known to all hearts, and understood by all ranks are roused by every situation in which the most fertile imagination and the most consummate art could have placed them.

HAMLET, finding his father prematurely cut off by the hand of death, a father dear to his family, beloved by his subjects, and an honour to humanity; would, in reason and religion, have found a consolation, and have reconciled himself to this loss, dreadful and irreparable as it was, as a natural casualty, and the will of that being, in whose hands are the lives of us all, did not a secret admonition warn him that all was not right; but this suspicion, difficult to be cherished in a noble mind, requires strong circumstances to confirm it. His mother's wedding with his uncle, that followed so hard upon the death of his father, though it excites his horror, does not exhibit sufficient proof of a crime which seems too abominable for belief; and this credulity on the side of virtue is the most beautiful feature in the character of HAMLET.

Under the influence of this conflict is HAMLET most judiciously introduced as the only mourner in his uncle's splendid court. ' With this grief the mother is made unfeelingly to reproach him; hypocritically representing it as the breach of a religious duty which, had she been sincere, would have been a fact. HAMLET, though not persuaded, is overruled; and in this state he is left alone to examine his mind, and out of charity, if possible, to find a motive for the strange and unnatural conduct of his mother,

Though no man ever threw action into such strong situations as SHAKESPEAR, his soliloquys are unquestionably the finest part of his writings, and the finest of his soliloquys are the deliberations of HAMLET. Being left alone, and feeling himself impelled to explore the business of his father's cruel death, and his mother's sudden and incestuous marriage, his mind sinks under the impending trial, and he wishes for annihilation rather than to undertake the awful task.

“ Oh that this too, too solid flesh, &c.”

He next goes into his mother's conduct, for which he cannot find either motive or excuse. He describes her fondness for his father, recollects that she would hang on him as if desire encreased by feeding, that she followed him to the grave like NIOBE, all tears, and yet in a little month she married his uncle, “ My father's brother,” says he, “ but no more like my father than I to HERCULES.” The result of this deliberation is that it cannot come to good; and while he is involved in a consideration of all the dreadful consequences, likely to be showered on the heads of this wicked pair, the fittest mood for the poet's purpose, HORATIO and MARCELLUS come to inform him that they have seen his father's ghost.

Nothing can be better prepared nor conducted than this scene. HORATIO, who wants gradually to open his awful commission, begins by telling HAMLET, in answer to his enquiries that he came to see his father's burial. The prince, big with the consequences, replies that he should rather have thought it was to see his mother's wedding. This introduces a comment, and, at length, an eulogium from HORATIO on HAMLET's father, on which the pious son is roused into that famous reply, "He
" was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not
" look upon his like again."

This is the moment for HORATIO to divulge the awful secret, nor can any thing be more interesting than the remainder of this scene. The cautious enquiries of HAMLET, his eagerness, his tenderness for his father, making HORATIO repeat over and over again how he looked, whether he was armed, and other fond circumstances full of duty and respect, are in the best style of dramatic management; till, at length, having ascertained the fact and felt the whole force of its importance, he exclaims,

" I'll watch to night, perchance 'twill walk again."

and then,

" If it assume my noble father's shape,

" I'll speak to it, though hell itself shou'd gape

" And bid me hold my peace."

It now becomes a matter of business. He dispatches his friends to wait for him; his suspicions when alone grow stronger and stronger; he meets the ghost; he is urged to revenge, the nature of his father's death is explained, and the powerful climax which this natural and gradual developement of so material a circumstance was meant to attain, comes out in the expression,

“O my prophetic soul, my uncle!”

and shews that, from the moment of his father's death, his suspicions, which owing to his own nobleness of heart he had unwillingly entertained, were influenced by feelings which human nature could not controul.

As to the scene of the ghost, I shall not at present enquire into the propriety of introducing a ghost at all, nor examine the objections that have been made against it by the critics with Mr. VOLTAIRE at their head, who, nevertheless, was not content with bringing forward the ghost of NINUS in his *Semiramis*, but he made him stalk forth at noon day, I shall only say, that for the sake of literature, to which this character is a shining ornament, I am in common with many thousands very happy that SHAKESPEAR gave us this sample of his incomparable abilities.

Taking it for granted that the scene between HAMLET and the ghost is as natural as any thing else, I shall venture a word as to its drift and operation. When the awful novelty of his father's reappearance has a little subsided, when fascinating terror has given way to manly resolution, and the ghost finds HAMLET "apt," the horrid story comes out and he is told that "if he has nature in him not to bear it." This he most solemnly vows and declares that, for the purpose of entertaining and practising revenge, he shall wipe away from his brain all trivial fond records.

This seems to be his motive, which is said to be a shallow one, for his conduct to OPHELIA. It does not, however, deserve so much reprehension as it has received. The business of HAMLET is to be thought mad, which disposition, as he calls it, he puts on that he may the better ask those sort of odd questions which, by being satirically thrown in may obtain for him by their shrewdness and ambiguity, such answers as may corroborate the intelligence he has received from the ghost; and what can so substantially confirm the opinion of those around him that he is mad, as outrageous behaviour to her he most loves, a thing generally understood as a criterion of insanity.

In fact, from the milkiness of his disposition, and that strong sense of his moral duty that everywhere mark his character, he pants for better proofs than those he has already received through the means of a supernatural agent; and, when he finds that chance has thrown in his way an opportunity, through the medium of the players, of searching the matter to the quick, his mind is materially relieved from his fears lest he should have listened to a fiend who came to practice on his melancholy, and tempt him on to damn himself; and, to clear up this doubt, he is determined to have grounds more relative.

In his progress to this point, how astonishingly has the poet, in HAMLET's different soliloquys, in his scenes with POLONIUS, with ROSENCRAND and GUILDENSTERN, and with the players, indulged himself in all that beauty and exquisite variety of which he alone was capable. Is there any thing in the ancients or the moderns equal to many things in these scenes? Is there any thing in PLATO equal to the soliloquy, beginning with the words "To be or not to be?" Is there any thing in the style of VIRGIL equal to the style of SHAKESPEAR, or in the piety of ÆNEAS to the piety of HAMLET?

Solid, sober, convincing argument; shrewd,

sensible and keen observation, and noble, elevated and sublime sentiments, every where mark the commanding genius of this wonderful man. The deepest and most philosophical truths are sent home to every comprehension by being dressed in the most perspicuous simplicity. How astonishingly written is the speech beginning, "Why what a piece of work is man!" What variety and acuteness is there in the examination of real and feigned grief, in his observations of the actor's commiseration for HECUBA, nay, his advice to the actors as to the manner of performing their parts, which every actor of good sense has ever since cherished as a treasure, shews that his judgment and penetration embraced every thing. There is nothing strained in his expression, nothing that a child might not extemporaneously utter, yet can any thing so intimately touch the heart, or so impressively interest the mind?

The play acted before the king, the closet scene between HAMLET and his mother, said by some to be the best thing in SHAKESPEAR, and a variety of passages give abundant proof of the truth of this assertion, all which I could with pleasure dwell upon were I less circumscribed; as it is I shall content myself with saying that, though I allow the plot gets tame after the death of POLONIUS, that the

mad scenes of **OPHELIA**, beautiful as they are, and her premature destruction, might, poetically speaking, have been spared, **LAERTES** having without them sufficient provocation to rouse his resentment, though I wish in common with others that the catastrophe had been more happily conducted, and agree that the grave diggers are extraneous, yet the prodigious variety of characters and incidents, the warmth and strength with which they are discriminated, the truth, the observation, the force, the wit, in which piety, ambition, capriciousness, fidelity, vanity, officiousness are set up, as objects of imitation or contempt, are so numerous in this piece, and produced in such a rapid succession, that it is difficult to lay the finger upon a fault without the danger of expunging a beauty.

CHAP. IV.

SHAKESPEAR'S PLAYS CONTINUED.

King John, one of those plays which have largely contributed to the general celebrity of SHAKESPEAR, was produced in 1596. There is a boldness and a strength in this tragedy which has served to hand down the character of the times both faithfully and meritoriously, and shewn how greatly the dramatic historian, through the vehicle of representation, has the advantage of him who merely narrates.

JOHN himself is portrayed in a most masterly and commanding manner, and will ever remain a striking lesson to all monarchs how to steer between the extremes of weakness and wickedness. The scene with HUBERT has often been considered as one of the finest ornaments of the English language. Indeed it is difficult to say what part of its conduct most demands our admiration. The tampering with the half villain HUBERT, the dread that the crime

has been actually committed, and at length laying the blame upon the instrument, and even catching at the excuse of having seen the assassin in his look, are powerful strokes.

The gallant, noble, and careless FAUCONBRIDGE is a most happy portrait. and speaks for itself as a true likeness of RICHARD CŒUR de LION. That mixture of courage and levity, which is so faithfully the character of the soldier, no one ever knew how to depict like SHAKESPEAR; and, notwithstanding the critics, we have here a proof that he would have found no difficulty in continuing MERCUTIO to the last act, who is perfectly FAUCONBRIDGE, except the roughness and the blunt honesty*.

The other characters in this play are well sustained, and SHAKESPEAR merits the thanks of pos-

* This is a discrimination that we always find most critically attended to in SHAKESPEAR. Honour and honesty, essentially mean the same thing. The essence of both consists in shunning meanness and every other contemptible quality; but there is a peculiar frankness belonging to honesty with which honour may dispense, and there is an erect dignity in honour which honesty is unconscious of. In short honesty is plain, and honour polished. This is the distinction so happily hit in the characters of MERCUTIO and FAUCONBRIDGE. Both are honest, both are honourable; but let the mind chuse the appropriate epithet to distinguish them singly, and we shall give honesty to FAUCONBRIDGE, and honour to MERCUTIO.

terity for bringing us intimately acquainted with that weak and wicked monarch, from whose vice and folly, as light issues out of darkness, or a calm becomes more lovely from a contemplation of the storm that preceded it, originated Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights.

Richard the Second was performed in 1597. This play is suspected to have been only revised by SHAKESPEAR. Certainly we cannot trace in it his usual force, either as to the characters or the language. The probability is that it was written in a hurry, which by the way is no excuse, and, as the circumstances are wholly taken from the historians and chroniclers of that day, many passages may have been literally transplanted from the history to the play. This having been done, the subject was found so unproductive that the author never thought it worth his while to finish it; and then the utmost we can say is that SHAKESPEAR was to blame for letting a play come forward unworthy of his reputation.

Alterations of this play have been frequently attempted but always without success. One of these was by THEOBALD, who dedicated his piece to the earl of ORRERY, from whom he received a hundred pounds in a handsome snuff box. Thus moths live

upon books. If men can write why dont they produce books themselves.

That SHAKESPEAR took very little pains with *Richard the Second* is the more probable from his having produced *Richard the Third* in the same year; a bold and most extraordinary production. Perhaps there never was so prominent a character produced as this, nor one thrown into such a variety of positions, every one calculated to accomplish the end of truth and justice, by warning the spectators against the dreadful effects of inordinate pride, and lawless ambition.

RICHARD masters all hearts, and controuls all minds; working to his purpose the passions and foibles of mankind at his pleasure. He administers to the pride of BUCKINGHAM; and, not only by that means accomplish his ends, but makes him an instrument in his own downfall. He so avails himself of the vanity of lady ANN that she consents to do the very thing she dreads, and what she knows must prove her destruction. What can be such a master piece as this scene? On the very spot where she accompanies her husband towards his grave, she consents to marry his murderer; and yet is this extraordinary change wrought in so artful a manner that

the most fastidious critic will not venture to pronounce it unnatural. Well may he exclaim

“ So mourned the dame of EPHEsus her love.”

In this manner, off or on the scene, is he throughout the play present to the imagination; till, at length, having, like the Devil he serves, left all those to that fate to which his craft has lured them, he becomes the worst tool in his own miserable plot; the feeling at the fall of the rest being pity, that at his fall execration.

Throughout these and other instances, with which this play is replete, has SHAKESPEAR most artfully warned his spectators, not only against villainly itself but also the risk and danger of conniving at it. Many of the instruments of RICHARD, deceived by his hypocrisy, are tempted to swerve from rectitude in hopes to work his conversion. Here has our poet shewn himself a master in his art. The best motive in the world is no excuse for committing a positive wrong; but the play is known and repeated by heart; and it is a fact notorious to every one that there is no instance upon record of any thing which has so forcibly operated with the English nation to create a rooted aversion to tyranny as this very tragedy.

Having noticed the production of *Richard the Second*, and so extraordinary a play as *Richard the Third* in the same year, will it not appear astonishing that it should also produce the first part of *Henry the Fourth*; a play, be it for character, situation, writing, conduct, or any other dramatic requisite, that cannot be sufficiently extolled. It is full of beautiful and rich nature from the beginning to the end; where, except in SHAKESPEAR, have met together so many characters, so correctly natural, so strongly coloured, and so judiciously contrasted.

The bold, yet apprehensive HENRY, who in plausibly maintaining the crown he had usurped, fancies that it totters on his head; his volatile son who seems to be the scourge of his father's crime, but who has native honour enough in the end to correct the levity and folly of the Prince of Wales in the dignity and honour of the King of ENGLAND and FRANCE; the noble natured HOTSPUR, meditating revenge against the man whom he had raised to a throne, and who ungratefully spurns those offers of assistance he no longer needs, a serious lesson to those who even from the best motives support a wrong cause; these, as strong and warm written characters, have a high and meritorious title to admiration.

What then shall we say when we come to speak

of FALSTAFF? the most inimitable character that ever was produced. Shall we any longer say that SHAKESPEAR could not have pursued the character of MERCUTIO? Let us stay and see whether that can be possibly be our opinion when we have followed the humourous knight through the braggart in this play, the moralist in the second part of *Henry the Fourth*, the lover in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the knave in them all. The wit of FALSTAFF, or rather the broad humour which contains something better than wit, is so true, so striking, so irresistible, that the severest cynic must laugh and must approve.

The scrapes he lies him into, and afterwards lies himself out of, castigate the folly of lying by laughing at it to the highest pitch of perfection. But this humour, known so well by all, and so difficult to be described by any, is every where electrical from the two men in buckram, onward to the description of the ragged regiment, and finishing by the giving HOTSPUR a new wound in his thigh.

NYM, and BARDOLPH, and POINS, are also admirably drawn; so is the HOSTESS. The incidents are perfectly probable and extremely natural and the quelling HOTSPUR's rebellion makes out, as a historical play, a very interesting catastrophe.

The Merchant of Venice came out the following year, and most claims our attention; which the more we give it the more we shall have cause for admiration, for the characters are perfectly natural, and drawn in a masterly manner, the writing is full of rare beauty and exquisite truth, and the conduct is correct and judicious; for the virtue it protects is rewarded, and the rancour and revenge it exposes are disappointed and punished.

The characters are drawn in the most glowing colours. The Jew is astonishingly bold and vivid. His turbulent and unsatisfied passions are thrown into a conflicted tumult in every way of which they are susceptible, and it is difficult to say where they are best agitated; whether in the meditated revenge on ANTONIO and his crafty bargain, in the scene with TUBAL, chequered with alternate joy and vexation, or the trial, where his sanguinary hopes are lifted to the highest climax of expectation, to be suddenly damped by disappointment and dismay.

PORTIA is most highly finished. Generosity, native dignity, and greatness of mind are every where consistently seen in her, from the caskets to the decision against SHYLOCK; and these qualities are brought forward through the medium of unaf-

fect ed sprightlinefs, neat wit, and captivating eloquence. The other characters all rank respectably, but the judgment of the author is particularly conspicuous in their gradually declining in consequence, the better to bring forward PORTIA and the Jew.

The writing of this play is full of beauty and sweetness, wit and humour, strength and force. The casket scene is charmingly written; so is the trial scene, in which the celebrated eulogium on mercy is so admirably introduced, stamping by a single trait, as it happens so very frequently in SHAKESPEAR, the fame of a poet. Nor can we conceive any think sweeter than the garden scene of LORENZO and JESSICA, in which the charms of music are so eloquently described; another standing quotation.

The words uttered by the Jew are throughout the whole play astonishingly appropriate. It is one of those many instances in SHAKESPEAR where every auditor, even of the meanest intellectual intelligence, becomes a correct critic and decides at once, that the character brought before him could not have said any more, nor any thing else.

The comic part consists of that playfulness in which SHAKESPEAR delighted to wanton, and relieves the interest at intervals throughout the piece,

from the sprightly GRATIANO to the trifling GOB-BOS; and thus the language is a natural and easy succession of every thing that can interest, please, and divert.

As to the conduct of the Merchant of VENICE, we are willing not to look at it too critically, because if we did we should lose much of our pleasure. The cruelty of the Jew is a bold, and for the sake of humanity let us hope an unnatural circumstance, but it is surely possible; I don't argue particularly in a Jew, for we are actually told, how far truly I do not pretend to say, that it really happened in a christian; but, true or false, natural or unnatural, if we agree to admit it, there is an end to objection.

It has also been complained of that time and place are violated, and that the proper moment for the catastrophe is at the end of the trial, and this last objection has some weight; but the conduct of this piece has one perfection which, perhaps, never was so happily wrought before nor since, I mean the union of the two stories; blended so consistently and brought about so naturally, that the trifling error committed against time and place is much more than atoned for by this most judicious attention

to action. The unity SHAKESPEAR seldom violated, which is infinitely more material than both the others put together.

Though I could every where dwell on the inestimable value of SHAKESPEAR's writings ; yet, as his pieces like those of every other author are of course unequal, it gives me pleasure to examine more minutely such as are in the highest estimation, though any candidate for dramatic fame might be content to subside his reputation on the gleanings.

As *All's Well that Ends Well* was one of three, some say four, plays, of which the *Merchant of Venice* was the first that came out in the same year ; it is not wonderful that it cannot rank with that admirable production. This, however, is in great measure owing to its unfortunate plot ; the answer to which is, that SHAKESPEAR ought to have chosen a better. There are, however, most charming passages in this play, and some strong and highly wrought circumstances. The character of PAROLLES, which seems to have supplied the hint for BOBADIL, is in our delightful poet's best style of humour ; and from the mouth of HELEN we hear many of those beautiful and fascinating passages which, in him, spring from a source inexhaustible.

Sir John Oldcastle is certainly not worthy to be ranked among the works of SHAKESPEAR, and it is with great propriety that it has been generally rejected. It has, however, evident marks in places of strong and similar genius, which might have arisen from his having improved it; but even then they appear to be the shadow of his writing rather than the writing itself.

This seems to be strongly confirmed by his bringing out in the same year *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*; a play replete with wonderful writing. In this respect the character of FALSTAFF is even improved; for, though he is full of rich and luxurious humour in the former part of this subject, his observations here have a pointed and deep subtilty which seems to have been improved by keener and maturer observation. In short, he is a thief in the first part, and a swindler in the second. Characters that require very different qualifications, though they are the same in principle.

The situations also that he is thrown into are stronger and richer. The scene with DOLL TEARSHEET is highly wrought, so is that with SHALLOW and SILENCE, from his dry examination of the recruits, onward to his art in borrowing the thousand

pounds, and at last his ecstasy at receiving from PISLOL the news of the king's death.

All the companions of FALSTAFF are also greatly heightened in this play, which is every where warm with incidents of the happiest invention, and full of characters both interesting and entertaining; shewing not more the fertility than the judgment with which SHAKESPEAR'S astonishing mind was fraught, and through which he delineated the features of human nature at pleasure.

In the following year came out *Henry the Fifth*, another wonderful production; but, indeed, every thing is wonderful in SHAKESPEAR. To recompence the auditor for the loss of FALSTAFF, the author has introduced FLUELLEN, whose mixture of pride, quaintness, and courage, it is impossible not to respect, and laugh at. PISTOL is in this play a first rate part, and indeed all the characters and incidents in the comic part are in the truest vein of pleasantry.

The volatile Prince, who has ripened into the prudent King, is a character of the most brilliant cast. He is every where great, noble and admirable. Cautious, yet resolved, before the fight; mo,

deft and unassuming after it; ever the foldier, the man, and the philosopher*. Much has been faid of the lines put into the mouth of the chorus, and in particular that they are unneceffary; and one facetious gentleman has faid they prove that SHAKESPEAR new nothing of the ancient chorus. The answer to the firft is, that these lines are fome of those unneceffary good things which every man of taste will rejoice that SHAKESPEAR thought proper to write, and to the other that he varied from the ancient chorus to improve upon it, for how could he be ignorant of what they insist he attempted to imitate.

The *Puritan*, produced in 1600, stands exactly upon the same ground as *Sir John Oldcastle*, and whatever hand SHAKESPEAR might have had in it, as it is far from a bad play, he very probably left it unfinished from his impatience to work at the two admirable productions that followed.

Much Ado about Nothing came out in the same

* Upon the whole this piece creates so much real interest, that it proved, upon standing the test, the most attractive of SHAKESPEAR's historical plays. This was confirmed when Rich brought forward the *Coronation*, at which time *Henry the Fifth* was performed at least three times oftener than any other given play proper to introduce that spectacle.

year. This play is so witty, so playful, so abundant in strong writing, and rich humour, that it has always attracted universal applause. The beauties it contains are innumerable, they are a cluster, and are set so thick that they scarcely afford one another relief, and yet the best critic would find it difficult to say which of them ought to be displaced.

BENEDICK and BEATRICE, have created the leading characters in fifty comedies, and yet have never been excelled, not even by CONGREVE. Their friendly sparring consists of that extemporaneous repartee, which is better than wit, because it is not studied, and better than humour because it is not gross. In short what was genuine in SHAKESPEAR by others has only been imitated, and there is one circumstance relative to these characters which boasts considerable pre-eminence, because all this wit, while its imitations have been introduced in general only to add a liveliness to the scene, is here the very pith and marrow of the plot, for it is the vehicle through which BENEDICK and BEATRICE, who had separately sworn to live single, are actually made to fall in love with each other.

The critics, however, who cannot help nibbling, have endeavoured to represent this wit as too licen-

tious in BENEDICK, and too light in BEATRICE. In their squeamish conscientiousness, however, they forget that when the rein is thrown over the neck of wit it will be playful; but, so it be not vicious, its curvettings ought to be pardoned. In the present case so little is there of vice in the pleasantries of BENEDICK and BEATRICE, that they exhibit as exalted a picture of every quality that can constitute honour, generosity, and the noble nature of love and friendship, as, perhaps, the records of literature can furnish.

There is not simply conversation in these characters, there is action; the best action: that which is intended to serve truth and recommend morality. BEATRICE's friendship to her cousin, and BENEDICK's challenging CLAUDIO, are among the grandest and noblest incidents the dramatic art has to boast of. The circumstance of laying the same trap both for BENEDICK and BEATRICE has been censured with some colour of truth, but it is materially varied, and after all not worth a single cavil.

All the circumstances of the plot have relation to one another. Even DOGBERRY and his watch, whose natural humour arises from an affectation of using phrases he does not understand, which has

been played upon by so many authors from that time to this, are absolutely necessary in the construction of the piece; for without them DON JOHN's plot could not have been defeated. In short this comedy displays a fund of beauty which has never failed to give unceasing delight to all ranks of auditors; and if it has faults, so has nature, to whom SHAKESPEAR was so faithful, and in whom the notable critics, if they took it in their heads, would undertake to discover as many imperfections as they have affected to find in her favourite.

As You Like It, produced in the same year, differs at all points, except general merit, from *Much ado about Nothing*. It is as full of wit, of beauty, of sweetness, and of moral, but the style of the characters, the conveyance of the matter, and the scene of action are the difference, and serve to shew that SHAKESPEAR could create interest, with equal facility, in a court or a forest.

As You Like It boasts one unrivalled merit, for it is a model for dramatic pastorals, and in vain do we place by the side of it the best productions of TASSO and GUARINI. This gives the wit, with all its brilliancy, a melancholy and grave air; for it does not consist of sallies in consequence of reflections in manners that actually pass before you,

but rather of moralizing on those which have passed, and from which you are distant both as to time and place.

To the reputation of an author, therefore, I know not if this species of writing be not the truer advantage. There appears to be more mind and more effort in producing it, not, however, in SHAKESPEAR, for his writings seem every where to have produced themselves, the sensible and strong observation in the sweet prattle of ROSALIND, the beauty and good sense in the reflexions of JAQUES, and the dry humour and true honesty in the faithful TOUCHSTONE, could not have been shewn to advantage in any other situations.

How many passages in this play are known by heart and considered of that memorable description that I have had such frequent occasion to notice. Quotations from the mouths of ROSALIND, and TOUCHSTONE, are in the recollection of every one, and that celebrated speech, known by the name of *Shakespear's Seven Ages*, has been, time out of mind, bawled by men, and lisped by children.

As to the plot of the play, it has by some been considered as romantic, but this certainly constitutes

its essence ; for without it we should lose the heroic friendship of CÆLIA, and the blunt fidelity of TOUSHSTONE ; besides, if the characters are thrown into extraordinary situations, it has not arisen from choice but compulsion, and, therefore, they do not enjoy fanciful pleasure absurdly chosen by themselves, they make the best of their unfortunate situations, and endeavour to turn that trouble that has been forced upon them into pleasure.

In this light, nothing can be more interesting nor affecting than the plot of *As You Like It*. The very circumstance of the ladies so suddenly giving away their hearts, which doctor JOHNSON does not seem to approve, is by no means for such a plot improper. They want protectors. Besides there is a parity in the fortunes of ORLANDO and ROSALIND, that begets a very natural sympathy, and renders the incident beautiful and affecting. I will agree, however, with the doctor that it would have been a most admirable advantage to literature if SHAKESPEAR had taken an opportunity of exerting his extraordinary powers by writing a scene between the Hermit and the Usurper.

The next play we shall have to examine will be *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which came out in 1601. This piece, take it as fair unadulterated na-

ture, consisting exactly of the very materials which constitute the best species of true comedy, must be so pronounced at least equal to any thing in the English language. Such a variety of characters, all true unexaggerated nature, without quaintness, without affectation, speaking in the manner and to the very letter of real life, every one as necessary to the plot as the various compartments of a building, just in proportion, essential in utility, never better united together.

The plot is natural, simple, and interesting; and, though an *episode* grows out of it which begets much perplexity and true legitimate *equivoque*, nothing from first to last can be more perspicuous. Jealousy has never been so strongly depicted, nor so happily exposed to ridicule. The very blindness of FORD in being gulled out of his money and his senses by FALSTAFF, is in the happiest extreme of true comedy; and though we have seen complaints that the situations of the scenes might be transposed, and that the play might have been ended almost at any part of it, yet it is impossible to say that this could have been done with effect, because the repetition of the supposed provocation is the very paroxysm in which the fever finds a cure for itself; for otherwise, in SHAKESPEAR'S OWN

words in another place, it would but "skin and
"film the ulcerous part."

We have also been told of FORD's absurdity in considering FALSTAFF as an object of jealousy; but who that knows the blindness of that passion will not consider this as the cunning of the scene. Mrs. FORD's ground is secure. She places a confidence in a valuable and approving friend, and the more loosely her conduct appears to her husband the stronger is sure to be his remorse when he finds an amiable wife has condescended to go such lengths to cure him of his ungrateful suspicions.

As to the episode, in which all the subordinate characters are concerned, it is strongly interwoven with all the main design and the incidents that grow out of it are truly pleasant and at the same time hold out a wholesome moral.

As to the characters, the most prominent of course is FALSTAFF; though there is no saying for the utility in their situations to which to give the preference. FALSTAFF is most happily hit, even in the difficult light in which he is placed. We are told that queen ELIZABETH commanded SHAKESPEAR to make FALSTAFF in love. It has been

well observed by doctor JOHNSON that "a man
" does not with great facility write to the ideas of
" another, and that love was not in FALSTAFF's na-
" ture." SHAKESPEAR has, however, from his gross
vanity, from his avarice, from his cunning, conjured
up something much better than love in FALSTAFF,
for he has made him fancy Mrs. FORD in love with
him, which is truer comedy. This, his abuse of
what he fancies confidence in her, and his adminis-
tering to the pleasure of FORD under the name of
BROOK, employ all the passions proper to FAL-
STAFF, and at last make him the grossest dupe in
his own plot.

This is the very essence of comedy; and, as it
serves to throw FALSTAFF into all those situations
which call forth his peculiar humour, may be
considered in a most felicitous light. Who can
resist the description of his being foused in the
THAMES. His reading the letter, and various other
circumstances. His luscious ideas, his voluptuous
mind, his sensual passions are all displayed in the
highest colouring, which shews in a most extra-
ordinary manner the wonderful resources that were
to be met with in the genius of SHAKESPEAR.

FORD is a jealous character distinctly different

from any other in SHAKESPEAR, OTHELLO is provoked to by a villain, and from the consciousness of his own unworthiness, IACHIMO from absence and fictitious testimony, TROILUS from a conviction that his wife was a wanton, and the rest from other motives; but FORD is jealous through pride and from a belief that a most unworthy object is preferred to him. This, as there is nothing so mean as jealousy, though nothing so much to be pitied, puts him upon shifts which make him almost as contemptible as his rival; and, under the tricks played him by the merry wives, as they are called, perfectly laudable; whereas, were there not this strong provocation, Mr. FORD's conduct would be reprehensible, if not unpardonable. In short, SHAKESPEAR knew that this was the only species of jealousy that could possibly be laughed at, and, therefore, with that knowledge of human nature that has every where distinguished him, he has made it the ground work of so entertaining and laudable a plot, that no portrait of jealousy has since been drawn but this comedy has sitten for some of the features.

I could with great pleasure go over the partilar merits of the other characters, they are so various, and so admirable; but it would only be describing

what every body knows, both in their own forms and in the imitations of them that have pervaded so many other productions*, I shall, therefore, apologize for every word I have written on the subject of this admirable play, because every word, in truth, in reason, in public opinion, and in notoriety, is totally unnecessary; so well does the heart know how to despise criticism where the auditor has only to hear and admire.

Henry the Eighth was also performed in 1601, and gives us another proof that there was nothing too mighty for the grasp of our poet's genius. This is the last of SHAKESPEAR'S historical plays, and is evidently written in compliment to queen ELIZABETH. I cannot be of doctor JOHNSON'S opinion

* It has been observed that SHAKESPEAR seems to have been original in characters that are particularly marked by foreign and provincial pronunciation, but that the merit of such characters is in the actor and not in the writer. This is the strangest of all assertions, and I should not have noticed it had not the authority been respectable. The actor can do nothing if nothing is given him. Welchmen may sputter, Irishmen speak the brogue, and Frenchmen clip English to all eternity, but this is not enough, it is the wit and humour conveyed by this vehicle and not the vehicle itself that begets attention, and though I have often seen actors who can from their excellent merit make a little go a great way, I never yet saw one who could make a great deal out of nothing.

that the genius of SHAKESPEAR in this play comes in and goes out with KATHERINE, and that every other part may be easily conceived and easily written. The specimen of the true and interesting pathetic which SHAKESPEAR has given us in the character of KATHERINE is peculiarly admirable, and among the best efforts of his inimitable talents; but are WOLSEY and HENRY only common characters? Or are they what they have been universally allowed, strong, powerful, and dramatic. Does BUCKINGHAM go for nothing? And are such exquisite lines as he utters when he is led to execution easily conceived? I wish they were, if for no other reason than that we might comprehend that secret of writing with which nature entrusted our delicious poet. But the lines, which in another place the doctor has applied to DRYDEN, "that in
" a pointed sentence more regard is commonly had
" to the words than the thought," seem to hit him here particularly hard; but, as I mean hereafter to examine this gentleman as one of the critics of SHAKESPEAR, I shall content myself at present with saying that the world and doctor JOHNSON are of different opinions.

Cromwell is one of those plays rejected as SHAKESPEAR's, and certainly with great reason, for it has upon the whole less of those marks of his

genius and judgment than any of those pieces that have been merely attributed to him. That he had some concern in it, however, cannot be doubted. The foot of HERCULES can belong only to HERCULES *.

Troilus and Cressida, the last play SHAKESPEAR produced in the reign of ELIZABETH, came out in 1602. A great deal has been said to prove that this was written after CHAPMAN produced his *Version of HOMER*, a fact by no means, however, substantiated, or, indeed, if it were, would it materially alter the question, for SHAKESPEAR and CHAPMAN were not exactly of equal merit †.

SHAKESPEAR must some how certainly have read the history of the Trojan War, perhaps, from CAXTON, and became intimately acquainted with

* I shall anticipate a ridicule here which will be too obvious to escape wittlings; who, considering this declaration as a defence of SHAKESPEAR, will be apt to say that with all my cautious care of his character I cannot help acknowledging that he put his foot in it, a circumstance and expression I should disdain to notice were it not to shew how easy it is to ridicule.

† I think it pretty nearly amounts to a proof that SHAKESPEAR knew the Trojan War before CHAPMAN's *Homer*, by many passages in his works. For one instance he makes PISTOL say, shall I Sir PANDARUS of TROY become?

the various qualities of the Grecian generals, for he has drawn their characters with full as much beauty and truth as HOMER, and one is apt to think that he only read the history and knew nothing of HOMER's particular manner of treating it; for, though the characters are the same, and may be known through the portraiture of both authors as likenesses, there is a dignity and a sublimity in the manner of their expressing their sentiments in this play, beyond any thing of that nature in the *Iliad*, and is so much better at any rate than a translation, that without grecisms the characters are critically Greeks, a discrimination that SHAKESPEAR understood better than any author that ever lived.

As to the other merits of this play, they are various, but they are irregular and hastily put together. CRESSIDA and PANDARUS are characters violently drawn, but they beget that sovereign and ineffable detestation of vice which it is the peculiar duty of the dramatic poet to excite. The brutality of THERSITES is well thrown in to mortify the wanton CRESSIDA, and the conduct in ISOILUS's detection of her falsehood and wickedness is masterly.

With this play I shall at present take leave of SHAKESPEAR to look after his cotemporaries; la-

menting my inability to do him justice except in my feelings and my wishes, yet grateful for an opportunity of expatiating on a theme which affords me the pleasure of paying a tribute of respect, and admiration, to great, and extraordinary talents.

CHAP. V.

JONSON.

IN the list of those dramatic poets who were celebrated in the reigns of ELIZABETH and JAMES the First, JONSON claims immediate rank after SHAKESPEAR; and it is but fair to say that the strong sense and sober regularity of his writings were of infinite consequence to those other authors of that time, whose pens, unlike the pen of SHAKESPEAR, which never ventured in vain, required a masterly criterion for their regulation, such as JONSON knew how to set up.

Of this use was this schoolmaster in literature, whose pupils very often would have run riot had he not held up the rod of criticism perpetually *in terrorem*. Not that JONSON did not know nature as well as erudition, for we have many striking proofs in his dramatic writings that he did; but it was awk-

ward nature, dry nature, sententious nature, nature in stilts and trammels; and, though faithful to truth as truth is to perfection, the proper proportion of amusement and instruction was mistaken, and the force of improvement was unfounded in that tasteless, and often nauseous vehicle, through which it was meant to be conveyed.

It might be invidious to place JONSON by the side of SHAKESPEAR, because the loss to him in the comparison would be infinite. It is indispensable, however, to notice, because it is a historical fact, that he had the experience of nine years, during which time SHAKESPEAR was licking the stage into form, before he brought forward a single piece; and, this premised, whatever the world in general may think of the matter, SHAKESPEAR must have been the preceptor of JONSON.

We are told, indeed, that SHAKESPEAR fostered him and his works, and with some difficulty so wrought his iron that at last it became malleable and assumed something like form; and we are also told that he was very ungrateful in return for this kindness; which circumstance, if true, carries with it a proof of that remark which may invariably be ventured, that genius is naturally allied to liberality, and pedantry to envy.

Indeed the whole life of JONSON seems to have been a series of pride, meanness, surliness, insolence, and discontent *. Turbulence threw him into the army, restlessness made him quit the army for the stage, brutality hurried him to take away the life of a fellow creature, and capriciousness induced him to change his religion, all which circumstances are mentioned, however, here only to corroborate what has been before asserted that the different features in the mind of the man often operate upon the labours of the writer.

JONSON was educated at Westminster school under the celebrated CAMDEN; but the narrow ideas of his father-in-law, who was a bricklayer, and who saw no further use for instruction than the level and the square, induced him to take JONSON from that learning, which he is said to have imbibed with great avidity, to teach him his own trade that he thought would build him a more solid fortune than the trade of poetry. The young gentleman, however, who had more taste for building castles in the

* How arrogantly ungrateful was his message to CHARLES the First, who advanced him as poet laureat, and frequently loaded him with benefits; one of which, a hundred pounds, is acknowledged in an epigram. The king sent him ten guineas upon hearing that he was poor. "His majesty," said JONSON to the bearer, "he sent me ten guineas because I am poor and live in an alley. Tell him his soul lives in an alley."

air than houses upon terra firma, treated this intended kindness with great contempt, and, leaving his family, went into the army in FLANDERS.

The study of literature was more congenial to the feelings of JONSON than the study of military tactics. He, therefore, took an early opportunity of leaving the army and repaired to CAMBRIDGE, where it should appear that he made no great stay, owing to the narrowness of his finances, for we soon find him an actor at the Curtain Theatre, Shore-ditch. Here, following the steps of SHAKESPEAR, he tried his hand at writing plays, in which occupation, however, he appears, for a time, to have been unsuccessful. At length he wrote *Every Man in his Humour*, a comedy beyond doubt of much sterling excellence, and from that time his reputation began to be established.

JONSON was perpetually squabbling with all mankind, and among the rest with SHAKESPEAR; who, in his own words, might have replied with perfect indifference, "Till thou can'st rail the seal
"from off the bond." These, probably, might have been his sentiments, for we do not find that he condescended to notice a slander that was born of ingratitude, and nursed by envy. JONSON did

not every where, however, fare so well ; for some of his malice drew on him a quarrel which finished by his killing a man in a duel, for which he was imprisoned ; but he procured his release by changing his religion ; and thus he exhibited that picture which, whatever merit it might have had, was not even in the least degree like true genius, for it was wisdom dressed like folly, knowledge hid by vanity, and talents obliterated by arrogance ; presenting at once a mind, powerful, mean, offensive, overbearing, and accommodating.

The different pieces which JONSON produced amount to about fifty-three in number, besides one or two which are attributed to him ; but among these are only two tragedies, and ten comedies, the rest being either masques, or comic satires, or else sketches written to serve some temporary purpose, and this statement alone may serve to shew how completely the works of JONSON kick the beam when poised against those of SHAKESPEAR.

Yet was his merit great and extensive, and he shall be allowed it to the letter, for it is not in his want of sufficient talents, for one man, that we discover the disparity ; it is in his rival's possessing the talents of twenty men.

As to tragedy, JONSON is absolutely an English SENECA, but a much better writer. *Sejanus* has great virile strength, and sound sterling merit; but it is heavy, dull, and declamatory, and lest any school boy should be mistaken as to its origin, the author has been honest enough to shew in what way he has quoted the ancients, even to setting down all his authorities; so that the fall of *Sejanus*, whatever it may be as a prompt-book, cannot be denied the merit of an excellent school-book.

The same faults pervade *Catiline*. The scenes are long, the speeches are full of declamation, the action is retarded, and the audience must sleep. Nevertheless it is full of all that merit which correct regularity and sound erudition can give it; but stilts are uneasy things, and the mind has no more objection to shake off weight than the shoulders*; and it is upon this account that, though every man who has a taste for literature will find in these scenes much pleasure on reflection, yet to read them a first time is an effort, a second a task, and a third impossible†.

* This is something like Dutch beauty, and puts me in mind of the man who wrote to his friend, to say that they had many fine women in HOLLAND, but that Madam SLAUGHENBROE was handsomer than Mrs. VAN BREAUSTAUT by half a ton.

† The admirers of JONSON may answer this if they will in the

Some of the comedies of JONSON, however, have distinguished merit. *Every Man in his Humour* is admirably constructed, well managed, and full of those characters which are the properest objects of comedy. I will not invidiously say that the outline of many of the parts may easily be traced. *The Braggart. The Jealous Man. The Simpleton, and The Plain Dealer*, are fair and obvious game, and one poet has as great a right to pursue them as another. It must be confessed that KITELY and BOBOARDIL in this play are masterly characters, and the means taken to cure the folly of the one and and punish the cowardice of the other are well pursued.

The subordinate characters through a very natural episode in which they are themselves concerned, contribute to bring about the catastrophe, in which necessary business the proteus BRAINWORM is very active. This rounds the conduct so artfully that no personage, even to COB and TIB,

same manner as the orator did his friend. He entreated him to read a speech he had composed and give him his opinion of it. "Why," said the friend, "out of kindness to you I have read it three times." "Indeed," said the other, "well, and how do you like it?" "Why," said the friend, "the first time I found it admirable, the second but indifferent, and the third damnable." "Well never mind it," said the orator, "it will do, for it will only be heard but once."

is foisted in, but all contribute very poetically to aid the double plot.

These are the merits of this play, to which, indeed, may be added the adroit manner in which JONSON has fitted a foreign subject to the English stage, for the original plot is Italian, which may very easily be discerned by the conduct of the intriguing BRAINWORM. As it is managed however here, nothing can be more vernacular than the humour, the manners, and the intrigue, and yet, with all these advantages, it has been with the utmost difficulty that this play has been able to keep ground; nor would it ever have held a reputable situation on the stage had it not occasionally revived through a union of uncommon talents.

The reason of this is obvious. Perfect wit and chaste humour, as they are called, may be natural but they cannot be general, and nothing but what is general can universally please. The public do not want an author to write a play as if every sentence obnoxious to criticism was a wound in his reputation; they would rather that he greatly succeeded in places even though he sometimes relaxed; and why? Because this is human nature, of which a play ought to be the faithful representative; and it is on this account that the hard, dry, though na-

tural humour of JONSON, and the refined and polished wit of CONGREVE, though they beget particular admiration, never attract general applause.

Every Man in his Humour is a chimerical instance of JONSON's eccentricity as a playwright. It has in it some admirable writing, and the characters are well drawn, but it is conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex, or set of supposed auditors, who sit on the stage and explain what if it were properly written ought to explain itself. By this means the personages smack off the old moralities and become passions rather than characters; and thus JONSON, instead of bringing the stage forward has rather endeavoured to throw it behind hand, and given one proof among many that, though he has much merit of every description, yet it consists rather of distracted and separate parts, than a sober and harmonious whole.

As *Sejanus* and these two comedies were all the dramatic pieces, except some of his masques, that JONSON produced before the reign of JAMES the first, by which time SHAKESPEAR had brought out twenty-four regular plays, I shall defer any farther mention of this author till I have brought his contemporaries up to that period and a general account of the stage itself and every regulation concerning it.

CHAP. VI.

CHAPMAN, THOMAS HEYWOOD, MARLOE, AND
OTHERS.

CHAPMAN in his way was a most extraordinary character. I shall not in relation to this author or any other exhibit any particular anxiety as to the town where he first drew his breath, the college that boasted the honour of his education, or any other of those adventitious circumstances which by some biographers are considered as of much greater moment than whether they credited the place of their birth, or the seminary where they were educated.

CHAPMAN, whoever were his ancestors, or wherever he was born, was a great credit to literature, as far as correct classical knowledge can render an author celebrated. He was born seven years before SHAKESPEAR; and began, as a scholar, to be in full reputation very early in life. His first

play, however, did not make its appearance till the very year JONSON brought out *Every Man in his Humour*; therefore I can only notice in this place that, which was called *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, and another produced the following year, under the title of *The Humerores Day's Mirth*, as the third dramatic effort of this author did not make its appearance till two years after the death of ELIZABETH.

I shall, however, before I speak of his plays, claim a right to mention CHAPMAN generally as an author; and it is not because I have in another place insisted that he is greatly inferior to SHAKESPEAR, for indeed who is not? That I am to afford him only a niggardly portion of praise; for he was a formidable rival to JONSON, who took him by the hand as a friend, the more securely to do him every possible kind of injury*.

* One instance of this is apparent in the play of *Eastward Hoe*, which was thought when it came forward to be the sole production of CHAPMAN. JONSON, however, is known to have assisted him in it and to have introduced some sarcastic passages against the Scots; which, operating, as he wished and expected, upon JAMES, produced the downfall of CHAPMAN at court, where he had great expectations through the influence of the Prince of WALES, and the Earl of SOMERSET. Nor had he any opportunity of reinstating himself through any explanation, for the Prince soon after died, and the Earl was disgraced.

CHAPMAN was certainly both a correct and an elegant scholar. His manners were polished, he enjoyed the countenance and protection of the great, and was the intimate friend of men of the most finished wit and ingenuity of that time. His plays have considerable merit, and some of his other works are by no means a draw back on his fame; but his best efforts are his translations, particularly those from HOMER, which were a great help at that period to erudition.

The two comedies, that regularly fall under our notice in this place, are the most indifferent of this authors works; being neither divided into acts, nor having any regular dramatic construction. The utmost therefore, that can be said of them is that they bore marks of genius and nature in the writing, and gave expectation of better productions which were to follow.

THOMAS HEYWOOD who has been already mentioned, and who like, his cotemporaries, HARDY in France, and LOPEZ de VEGA in Spain, seems to have derived all his merit from the number instead of the quality of his dramatic works, demands some mention here, though no more than two of his plays, at

least that we know of, appeared during the life of ELIZABETH.

This man, by some of the biographers, has been greatly extolled as a writer without any great appearance, however, of either truth or justice; for the prodigious quantity he wrote, for which he ransacked the ancients without mercy, whatever might have been his real merit had he taken time to correct and polish his works, rendered it impossible for him to turn any thing out of hand likely to secure him a solid reputation; and thus we have a list of twenty-four pieces, out of two hundred and twenty which he himself says he either wrote or was concerned in, little more known at this moment than by their titles.

HEYWOOD was certainly a good classical scholar, and as an actor he was pretty celebrated. Indeed the pursuing this occupation, and his being perpetually in company, for we are ridiculously told that he wrote his plays upon the backs of tavern bills, must have left him but little opportunity to complete the difficult task of writing plays, especially such an immense number as are attributed to him.

MARLOE who brought out his first play in 1590,

probably for the reasons before given, the very year when SHAKESPEAR also produced his first piece, was celebrated as an actor and well esteemed as a writer. HEYWOOD calls him the best of poets, not recollecting, perhaps, that SHAKESPEAR was in existence. He deservedly, however, possessed considerable reputation; and, with all the ponderous merit of JONSON's tragedy writing, I should rather think the efforts of MARLOE, either in themselves or the assistance they have afforded to others will have a longer and a better claim to the approbation of the public than those of the theatrical lawgiver.

MARLOE wrote no comedy, and his two tragedies of *Tamberlane the Great*, and his *Edward the Second*, are all that properly came before us here. The latter, however, did not make its appearance till 1598, during which lapse, as SHAKESPEAR brought out seven historical plays, he clearly made it his study to derive every possible advantage from so advantageous a circumstance, and it must be confessed that *Edward the Second* is by no means a bad play. The subject is well chosen, and the piece displays the troublesome events of that monarch's reign, particularly the fall of GAVESTON in very lively colours.

MARLOE would very probably have ensured to

himself a much greater degree of reputation had he not been led away by GEORGE PEELE and that set already spoken of, who gave into all manner of licentiousness, and were little better than atheists. The weakness of MARLOE's mind made him a prey to the folly and wickedness of these abominable doctrines; and, in his profligate moments, he wrote several tracts, the manifest drift of which was to prove our SAVIOUR an impostor, and to shew that the scriptures were full of idle stories, and that religion was only policy and priestcraft.

These paroxysms of folly have prevailed on certain restless individuals in all ages, and have constantly excited some curiosity from their novelty, and as constantly dwindled into just contempt and execration. It seems to have proceeded in MARLOE from fits of drunken phrenzy; for, in one of these he attempted to kill a footman whom he suspected of having been too kindly received by one of his dulcineas, when the man in self defence diverted the direction of the weapon; which, entering into MARLOE's head, killed him upon the spot.

This sudden death was considered as a judgment from Heaven for his impiety, and those who had before the weakness to admire his writings, going to the opposite extreme, now abhorred him and blamed themselves for their wickedness and credulity.

MARSTON, who wrote two plays during the reign of ELIZABETH, was considered as an eminent poet. His particular merit was the purity and elegance of his style, in which he carefully shunned all kind of ribaldry, grossness and obscenity; so much so, says an author, that "whatsoever even in the
" spring of his years he presented upon the private
" and public theatre, in his autumn and declining
" age he needed not to be ashamed of."

He had, however, more merit than this which would be pretty evident, had we not the testimony of his writings, from the boiling envy it excited in JONSON; who, peaceable as MARSTON was, drew on himself, by his repeatedly provoking conduct, a large share of that poet's literary castigation. They were a long time friends, and MARSTON dedicated his play, of the *Malcontent* to JONSON in warm and handsome terms. Envious, however, of his rising fame, as we have seen in the case of CHAPMAN, and which was the case indeed with most of his contemporaries, JONSON soon forfeited all pretensions to friendship, and violently broke through every tie of honour and gratitude; holding up the man who loaded him with carresses to contempt and ridicule.

MARSTON provoked to the utermost retorted upon JONSON; and, in his epistle prefixed to his

tragedy of *Sophonisba*, most successfully ridiculed the pedantic foppery in his works, and detected those thefts from the ancients with which he had stuffed *Sejanus and Catiline*. MARSTON produced eight plays, which are now, indeed, but little known, but some of them have served as the ground work for the writings of succeeding authors.

DECKER, another poet, for a time in friendship with JONSON, and afterwards most severely satirized by that drawcancer in literature, produced two plays before the reign of JAMES. What was the particular cause of the quarrel cannot now be known, but it is universally agreed that JONSON's envy and rancour, not being able to bear a rival near the throne, was its origin. We may collect a very faithful idea of it from the dispute between POPE and CIBBER; which, having originated in rancour on the side of POPE, every stroke he aimed at his adversary recoiled upon himself.

In JONSON's *Poetaster*, the *Dunciad* of that time, DECKER, under the title of CRISPINUS, is most severely handled. This literary hawk, however, so very fond of annoying small birds, had better, in this instance, have soared on without having attempted to pounce upon DECKER; for, as it happens with other hawks, that the very sparrows, who

are afraid of them on the ground, attack them successfully in the open air; so the light and agile DECKER, pegged away at the clumsy and unweildy JONSON, to so good a purpose, that he not only made his feathers fly but he galled him all over.

This he effected by writing a play called the *Satyromastix*; or *the untrussing the humerous Poet*. Here, under the name of young HORACE, he has made JONSON the hero of the piece. The public were charmed with the circumstance, and the play did wonders. Nay this was the foundation of DECKER's reputation, whose writings were certainly not of the first rate kind, yet, after his pride had been roused by the favourable turn this controversy took, he made up by assiduity what he wanted in talents, and, having become a good judge of dramatic effect, he enjoyed a considerable degree of reputable success.

Old Fortunatus, which, perhaps, originally roused the hornet JONSON, for, extravagant as the story is the piece has great merit, and *Satyromastix* are all the plays of this author that come under our notice here. He wrote single eight others, several in conjunction with WEBSTER, DAY, and other poets, and three or four besides are attributed to him.

TO MIDDLETON very little more has been attributed but that he wrote in conjunction at times with JONSON, FLETCHER, MASSINGER, and others; and this has been quoted as a proof that he could not be destitute of merit. A better proof, however, are his own plays, some of which are now in print, and well known; among these are *A Mad World my Masters*, *The Mayor of Queenborough*, &c. and they rank his reputation about upon a par with DECKER'S.

From the production of SHAKESPEAR'S first play to the death of queen ELIZABETH, who, it should be mentioned translated one of the tragedies of EURIPIDES, few known authors, except those here enumerated, wrote for the stage. EEDS is said to have written several plays but we know not even their titles. We are told that he wrote them in his youth, that they were mostly tragedies, and that, becoming in maturer years, a grave divine, a prebendary and chaplain to the queen, he stuck altogether to the duties of his profession, and, perhaps, upon this account he would not suffer his plays to be published.

YARRINGTON wrote one play, so did PORTER, so did BRANDON, and BERNARD translated the co-

medies of TERENCE. Besides these there were about thirty plays written by anonymous authors, so that during a period of fourteen years more than seventy plays were produced, only forty of them legitimately owned, and, out of those forty, twenty-five were certainly from the pen of SHAKESPEAR, and four others were attributed to him.

It will be seen by this what complete possession he had of the stage during the latter end of ELIZABETH's reign, and that in the short period of fourteen years he brought it to a degree of perfection, beyond which it has not since gone, nor can it ever go. I shall now, by a review of the playhouses and actors, shew the prodigious disadvantages under which all this arduous task was attempted, and in spite of which it was so completely accomplished.

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CHAP VI.

PLAY HOUSES AND ACTORS.

WE have already seen that noblemen retained players in their service, and that no others were regularly tolerated, but that even this was not sufficient to restrain their licentiousness, and, therefore, in 1589, the year in which SHAKESPEAR is said to have produced his first play, a circumstance on this very account highly improbable, players were altogether silenced till further notice.

Whether the influence of SHAKESPEAR revoked this mandate very suddenly or not, it will be difficult to say. It is certain, however, that his first play reduced the theatrical state to such order that playhouses began from that moment to multiply, and we find that, during the life time of this extraordinary man, no fewer than seventeen were known; among these were St. Paul's singing school, the Globe on the Bankside, Southwark, the Swan, the Hope, both also in Southwark, the Fortune, between White Cross

Street and Golden Lane, the Red Bull in St. John's Street, the Cross Keys in Grace Church Street, the Tuns, the Theatre, the Curtain, the Nursery in Barbican, the Playhouse in Blackfriars, the Playhouse in Whitefriars, the Playhouse in Salisbury Court, the Cock Pit, and the Phoenix.

We have here only sixteen. It is insisted upon, however, that there was another, a matter, however, of no great moment, nor ought we to understand that, though all these were built during the life time of SHAKESPEAR, they were, therefore, built on his account, for the Fortune, the Theatre, and the Curtain, were erected between 1570 and 1580; the Fortune, according to several writers, being the first regular English theatre, though it is much more probable to suppose it was the Theatre, from its name, which seems to suppose that it was the only theatre.

The term regular theatre used here is vague enough, for theatres could not be called regular till they had scenes, an advantage none of these boasted; though there cannot be a doubt but they had at times some sort of decorations, for these, even at the time of the Mysteries, are particularly described to us, and as to the Masques, which were performed at public weddings, and at court, there is no doubt

but the first architects and painters were employed to decorate them.

It is, however, certain that matted walls, or tapestry at best, were all the decorations then of the theatre, and these the audience were to fancy gardens, towns, palaces, or whatever else the poet might think proper; besides which the performances were by day light, another draw-back on stage effect, the necessary deception of which was, of course, by this circumstance materially injured.

But the grand disadvantage, which must have been a considerable check to the genius of SHAKESPEAR, was that women's characters were performed by men. It is evident that from this circumstance he kept many of his female characters in the back ground, and even the performance of those which, from their consequence in the piece, were obliged to be prominent, must have been necessarily inferior to what they would have been had they been represented by women.

It will be said that this objection holds good as to other authors as well as to SHAKESPEAR, and this is true; but, when in justice we are obliged to allow his great superiority in point of merit, it will

operate on that very account in a much stronger degree to his disadvantage than any other.

The public were certainly glad enough to take things as they found them, and the rage must have been very high indeed at that time for dramatic entertainments when so many theatres, so ill furnished with every requisite but good plays, could find means to exist.

As to actors, they must have been numerous indeed, and, upon consideration, we cannot help crediting they were performers of merit; for, as they, as well as the authors, must have found their disadvantages in rafters for ornamented ceilings, plastered walls for woods, rocks, and palaces, and sometimes neither ceilings nor walls at all, for in the Inn-yards they performed in the open air; there must certainly have been a great deal of the true Roscian stuff about the English actors at that time, for the less they had to help them out, the more they had to describe.

This merit will be the more easily allowed when we recollect that the English authors, like the Grecian, were also actors; and that SHAKESPEAR, JONSON, MARSTON, and MARLOE, enforced the effect of their writings by personating those characters

they delineated. We know not their exact merits upon the stage, and we have been told, by way of detraction, that SHAKESPEAR never attained a higher rank than the performance of the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*, and this may be a very good argument with those who estimate parts by their length. I have seen GARRICK perform the Ghost in *Hamlet*, and I should not think it an unfair argument to suppose had GARRICK's merit preponderated on the side of his writing, which posterity may know, instead of his acting which it cannot, that this very circumstance would be cited to prove the English ROSCIUS a very mediocre actor; so careful are we before we allow men too much merit.

This consideration does not weigh a feather in the argument. I cannot say that SHAKESPEAR was a capital actor, nor can any one demonstrate to me that he was a bad one. His lesson to the players in *Hamlet* shews pretty clearly that he knew what acting was; and it is not very likely that he would be either so ignorant or so vain as unconsciously to write in this lesson a satire against himself. At any rate it is impossible but that the assistance of the writers themselves must have added material weight to the celebrity of their pieces; and really one cannot but be charmed, even in the acting of the present day, admirable as it is supposed to be, when one sees now

and then a gleam of sense labouring to make its way through a "congregation of vapours," by means of which film authors are misrepresented, nature tortured into every shape but her own, and ease and simplicity distorted into affectation and caricature.

It will not be easily credited, as these authors were also actors, that the profession of a dramatic performer was not in great estimation at that time; nay, it is not clear to me but that it was then in much greater repute than it is now, or ever will be again; and the reason is there was more gratitude in the treatment they received, and a higher admiration of men that the public considered in possession of talents superior to their own.

On this account, as it has often happened in other countries, men of the first abilities, and in the highest situations, did not disdain to become actors; for no tolerated profession is disgraceful unless the members themselves disgrace it. Those of this description who had talents themselves, readily embraced it, those who had not readily encouraged talents in others. Sir THOMAS MORE did not disdain to turn actor, so little did he fear that the disrepute of the profession could injure the morality of the man; and TARLETON, who was really a licentious character, was, nevertheless, on account of his merit

admired, and even honoured, till his profligacy shut him out of that society exactly as it must have done out of any other.

There is another reason why the actors of that time must have been deservedly celebrated. Good writing requires good acting; and when have we witnessed such good writing as that of SHAKESPEAR? In him we have come to the perfection of the art. Have we had any thing since that demands the exertion necessary for the performance of RICHARD, LEAR, HAMLET, OTHELLO, MACBETH, and many other parts that the reader will point out to me? Do not nineteen out of twenty actors chuse a character for their first appearance from SHAKESPEAR? Why? Because the merit of the author assists the reputation of the actor, and thus we are obliged to go back to the matter of that time before we can shew what the exertions of actors at that time required.

We are told by various writers, decidedly, and without reserve, that acting has gradually declined from the time of SHAKESPEAR, and that the art is lost. BURBAGE, who was the original RICHARD the third, LOWIN the first HAMLET, and HENRY the eighth, and KEMPE, who was inimitable in the Clowns, are positively said to have as much surpassed

HART, LACY, MOHUN, SHATTERAL, and CLUN, who succeeded, as they did BETTERTON, and that set.

If this be true, which, however, it is extremely difficult to vouch, the merit of an actor must have been supposed to consist at that time of all the force and power necessary to be assumed, in order to give effect to the representation of great characters, unassisted by those decorations which now frequently attract the public without acting at all; and, this admitted, it was the acting of ROSCIUS, of ÆSOP, of those Mimes, of whose action alone we are told such prodigious things.

In this case the English stage possessed the best merit of the Grecian, and the best merit of the Roman; for it was supported by actors of both sorts. SHAKESPEAR and the other authors gave to acting a Grecian polish, following the steps of ÆSCHYLUS, and BURBAGE, LOWIN, and the rest, made it a profession singly, and emulated the Roman perfection of ROSCIUS and ÆSOP.

Besides these, as so many theatres existed at that time, the number of actors must have been immense; but, as a minute enquiry into this would lead

us only into conjecture, for, though a lamentable, one it is a certain fact that posterity cares but little for that merit which does not substantiate itself, I shall leave this subject till it can be better elucidated by a description of those plays and their representation which to an astonishing number did great credit to the reign of JAMES the first during the life of SHAKESPEAR.

CHAP. VIII.

STATE OF LITERATURE AT THE DEATH OF
ELIZABETH.

As it always happens that, while improvement in any one study is going forward, a sensible sympathy is felt in all the collateral parts, so it will be found in the present instance that, while SHAKESPEAR was improving the stage, the relative arts were every where verging nearer to perfection.

Poetry, painting, and music, in the reign of ELIZABETH, began as if by general consent to throw off barbarism; and, though their various merits manifested themselves in different parts of EUROPE, the general effect was electric; and while the Muses separately chose residences, the influence of all was diffused from people to people.

ITALY, however, was the IDA. There the arts which had been fostered under the auspices of LEON the tenth, now began to gain decided pre-eminence,

Painting, however, which had reached to a sublime height, and music which had acquired polish and refinement, seemed to keep their ground firmer than the stand made by literature; which, after the wonderful TASSO, and the charming GUARINI, yielded to the influence of the splendid talents and great genius possessed by poets of other nations.

The Spaniards, with CERVANTES at their head, began to grow very conspicuous in literature. MALHERBE about this time taught the French how to write poetry, MAMBRUN gave their language every polish that it could require from critical and grammatical excellence, and these poets, MALHERBE in particular, stamped a regulation and a criterion which overcame all the gothic barbarism into which French erudition had been plunged, and refined it into that elegance and neat point for which it has been since so justly celebrated.

English erudition, at no time calculated for that which is light and superficial, but always for that which is solid and true, had imbibed nothing more of Italian flight, of French point, of Spanish sarcasm than served the purpose of enforcing the necessary end to which the argument in question tended. Imagery it had wide and comprehensive as the imaginations that produced it, but the flowers were not

born to decay, but to illustrate truth and picture nature by the beauty of their colouring, and the sweetness of their odour.

Should any one doubt this, let him range with SPENCER'S *Fairy Queen* through all the wilds of fancy, the labyrinths of allegory, and the mazes of enchantment; and, as each new flight of imagination surprizes him into wonder and astonishment, let it also convince him into virtue and truth.

There would be no more difficulty by a review of the *Shepherd's Calender* to pronounce SPENCER a superior pastoral poet to GUARINI, or any other writer back to THEOCRITUS, than to prove SHAKESPEAR superior to any other dramatic author. Pastoral poetry has but one character; and, whether we resort to VIRGIL, to MAMBRUN, his imitator, or onward to any or all of those various penners of self evident truths who have written of hills and dales and fondly fancied themselves poets, the objects must be obvious, simple, and natural, and those who have been so fortunate, or rather ingenious to blend interest, inculcate moral, and afford pleasure, without insipidity, dullness, or puerility, a charge in which many eminent pastoral poets are unfortunately involved, are certainly the best writers of this description, and, therefore, I shall not hesitate to pro-

nounce SPENCER'S *Shepherd's Calender*, and SHAKESPEAR'S *As You Like It*, the best specimens, in their different characters, of this species of writing*.

* I know of nothing that has begot more controversy than this subject. A hundred instances may be cited, every one as ridiculous as the dispute between PHILLIPS and POPE, in which the latter gentleman, with his usual arrogant modesty, pretends to praise his rival that the world may extol him, at the same time when GAY'S Pastorals which were better than those of either POPE or PHILLIPS, were little heeded, and all to prove that readers in general are taken in by stark nonsense and the most offensive puerility, merely because the jingle of the rhyme captivates the ear. The famous ballad of SHENSTONE, who, if he had imitated SPENCER as closely in every thing else as he did in the *Schoolmistress*, would have held a higher reputation, has a poorer recommendation to public favour than any thing which ever obtained it, and this is saying a great deal, witness the following parody "On my banks are all furnished with bees," which is just as good and not a whit more ridiculous than the original:

My hives are all furnished with bees,
Quickset hedges my fences adorn,
My woods are all crouded with trees,
And my fields yellow over with corn.

I seldom have found any tares,
Of such use are my harrow and plough,
In my orchard grow apples and pears,
In my dairy there's milk from the cow.

Had the ballad, of which this is part of a parody, never been published, these lines might have stood with nine readers out of ten for good pastoral poetry, for the images are as true, as appropriate, and as interesting as in the original; but as unfortunately they contain only a representation of well known objects merely noticed and

We have seen, under the auspices of Buck-

not wrought upon, nobody cares a halfpenny for the shepherd's picturesque retreat, and the poetry sinks into quaintness and puerility. If he had shewn how he trafficked with his honey, and that with the money it produced he brought up a growing family, or solaced an aged parent; how his fences served to describe him a worthy member of social life by parting off his possessions from those of his neighbour, and, therefore, preventing depredations on either side, how his trees yielded him firing and timber for use and profit, and kindly formed a shade when fatigue courted him to repose. Had he, in short, shewn the comforts derived from his little harvest, the fruit of his industry; the advantage of his harrow and plough, and other agricultural inventions; the cyder, the perry, the butter, the cheese, and other blessings springing from the produce of his orchard and his dairy. Then would the feigned character of the peasant have spoken the beauty of the poet, and given the simplest of these objects a valuable interest. But this is seldom the case, even with the best writers; and, for readers, it is inconceivable how the correctest understandings are too often deceived into admiration by mere sound. A gentleman of strong genius, finished education,, and true poetic fancy, who has long given up writing for no other reason than because after taking unwearied pains, he could not meet with a liberal bookseller, wrote a burlesque pastoral which is stark nonsense from beginning to end, and yet it has been greatly admired as excellent poetry. I have heard several persons whose understandings rank high in the opinion of the world, speak in rapture of the following lines.

But hark what odours whisper in the wind!
Does Sol descend, or is my DÆLIA kind?
Avoid her look, there's magic in her eye;
Take heed ye mountains, if ye gaze ye die.

These whispering odours, falling suns, gazing mountains, are a very small specimen of the false images this poem contains, and yet there is scarcely an imputed beauty in pastoral poetry, from THEOCRITUS to SHENSTONE, that it does not successfully ridicule.

HURST, BERNERS, sir THOMAS MORE, and others, onward to sir PHILIP SIDNEY, what strenuous efforts were made to encourage literature in all its branches. Divinity had its advocate in HALES, who was a sound moralist, and a good poet; who was loved and followed in his life time, and whose works were published, after his death, under the title of *Golden Remains of Mr. John Hales*. KING, whose pulpit orations were of that sensible and convincing kind that graced the doctrine they recommended, was also a very populous churchman. King JAMES used to call him "the Prince of Preachers," and lord COKE is said to have been so charmed with his oratory, that he both declared him the best speaker he ever heard, and made his manner the model of his own imitation.

HALL, who was a very accomplished poet as well as a learned and sensible divine, served not only the cause of the church but literature in general; for, while his writings, under the title of *Meditations*, improved the mind, enlarged the understanding, inculcated the duties of religion, and described the beauty of virtue, proving that modesty, meekness, and piety, which he practised, his *Satires*, which are full of admirable point, enlivened the imagination, and exposed the deformity of vice, to the derision and contempt in which he himself held it.

OVERALL, who is said to have been the best scholastic divine this country ever produced, was a most strenuous and successful champion for this great cause; and, that he might prove his utility as a citizen as well as a scholar, he has earnestly attempted, in his *Convocation* book, to shew that our duty to temporal government springs out of our duty to spiritual government; a position that a divine has surely a right to maintain, for an union between social and religious obligation is certainly the most laudable thing that can be generally recommended, because, out of the spirit of that opinion issues the best consequences attendant on society.

Many other learned and elegant writers treated this great theme, at that period, with the becoming dignity and profound knowledge it demanded; and their abilities were properly called into action at this particular moment, when so many bigots and casuists joined to decry the Protestant religion that had been so nobly though so recently established. The disciples of BONNOR and MARY had yet their advocates, and the embers of those fires, so alarming to goodness and so shocking to humanity, that had been kindled in Smithfield, seemed now and then to emit a faint warning that without circumspection the flames might again revive.

As a government established on the firm basis of a mild and tolerant religion, seemed best calculated for a rational and moderate people, which the English in this reign became, the protection of property of course began to be more equitably regulated. Many extraordinary men lent their assistance to complete a work so essentially necessary to the benefit of society, and many difficulties were got over, and much obscurity cleared up in the old laws, as well as many admirable amendments introduced in the new.

COWELL, born the same year with SHAKESPEAR, whose study was not confined to the ecclesiastical laws, which branch he particularly professed, very meritoriously attempted at a simplification of them all; which, when we consider that the laws are inexplicable at this day, must have been a pretty arduous task. He wrote a book called *The Interpreter*, wherein he pointed out the signification of all law terms that had been used or authorized previous to that time; and he wrote a book of *Institutes* in the manner of JUSTINIAN, which was considered as a work of great merit.

Sir JOHN DAVIES was another law luminary of considerable celebrity, who wrote sound arguments on jurisprudence, and good poetry; two pursuits that

have seldom united in one man. His oratory seems to have been of that clear convincing sort for which lord MANSFIELD was so properly admired, and, indeed, the chief justiceship of the King's Bench would have been the appropriate vehicle for the exercise of his talents, but unfortunately soon after his appointment to that high station he died suddenly.

Lord COKE, whose great name stands so high in estimation for law learning, enlightened the reign of ELIZABETH. He was so indefatigable in the pursuit of his labours, which were eminent and meritorious, it might be said of him as of CÆSAR, that he thought nothing done while there was any thing left to do. "His learned and laborious works on the laws," says a writer, "will be admired by judicious posterity while Fame has a trumpet or any breath to blow therein." His labours, however various and extraordinary as they were, in no way fell short of the variety and singularity of his fortunes, which were an alternate rotation of power and disgrace; not so much in the reign of ELIZABETH, whom he calls the fountain of justice and the life of the law, but afterwards when JAMES came to the throne, who used to say, so well did COKE manage to repair ill fortune, that "he always fell on his legs like a cat."

Other great men, whose eminent abilities added lustre to the laws of their country, in this reign, might with great propriety be here enumerated. Their merit, indeed, wants no other criterion to prove it than its being able to keep a respectable stand at the time when BACON dignified human nature.

This wonderful character, whose eulogium every body has attempted and nobody has been competent to effect, seems to have been born to give a precise and accurate distinction to the high office of Lord Chancellor. His expanded ideas, his penetrating judgment, and his critical knowledge of causes and effects, gave him an innate and fixed comprehension of general equity, his competency to discern the errors he cancelled or corrected in questions of philosophy, and all those other subjects which his great genius so universally embraced, taught him with the same accuracy to determine between decision and redress; that difficult distinction which cannot be made but by a sound head, and an upright heart.

In my province I can only speak generally of BACON; otherwise I should have unfeigned pleasure in paying my feeble tribute of admiration due

to the talents of so exalted a genius. Fortunately the world would anticipate every syllable, were it ever so true or ever so strong, that I could possibly write on this great subject. His works, that grace the libraries of the learned, will be the best test of his high reputation which are allowed, by the literati of all EUROPE, to the everlasting honour of this nation, to have stamp'd him the first and most extraordinary universal genius the world has produced.

History, that mirror of the lives and actions of good and bad men, set up as the object of imitation or detestation of the wise and virtuous, was as industriously and as learnedly treated as divinity, or law, during the reign of ELIZABETH. SPEED, with great judgment and unwearied application, detected the errors of his predecessors, and exposed the futile and fanciful conjectures of GEOFFREY, of MONMOUTH, and WILLIAM, of MALMSBURY, in a most sensible and happy manner. His opinions also concerning other historians are given with no less good sense than deference; and, for the materials he was able to collect, and considering the uncertainty of events of which at that time nothing but a very imperfect account could be obtained, his *Chronicles of England* contain a fund of infor-

mation, which, from circumstances, and on comparison, bear strong resemblance to authenticity.

Stow has done more than Speed. He took up history in a very interesting way; for, besides his *Chronicles of England*, which traverse a large field, his *Survey of London* has rendered his historical intelligence more interesting by confining the subject to its proper scene of action. His researches into antiquity have turned out very valuable materials for other authors to work upon, and yet those authors have had so little candour, or gratitude, that I have seen the works of some of them who, instead of allowing the merit of those they were glad to imitate, have only deplored, that the antiquary Stow, and the historian Speed, were both taylor's,

Daniel, poet laureat to queen Elizabeth, was the first who began to give history a proper polish as well as a necessary perspicuity. Daniel had a good deal of the poet in him, and the actions of the great and good are best delivered from a poetic mind. His relations of facts are brief and pointed, and his observations, both political and moral, inform and entertain.

But these, however, as well as others had boasted

a preceptor in history of wonderful talents and endowments; a man whose clearness, force, and natural elegance, had long given lustre to erudition. This will be acknowledged what I say that I mean BUCHANAN, that mixture of SALLUST and LIVY, who united brevity and perspicuity with grace and politeness, and whom DANIEL seems to have copied on this account.

BUCHANAN was much honoured in other countries as well as in SCOTLAND, where he was born; and even MELVIL, his cotemporary and rival, who espoused opposite opinions, who was the firm and faithful adherent of MARY Queen of Scots, which misguided woman, had not her weakness led her to listen to the advice of less able and less honourable counsellors, might have escaped all her misfortunes, was not averse to do every justice to the fame and talents of BUCHANAN.

Added to all the other admirable qualities possessed by BUCHANAN, he was celebrated for the charms of his conversation, in which he seems to have emulated the Greeks. for his observations were short, nervous, and pointed; full of truth, knowledge, and experience; and might, had they been collected, have made a complete firing of apo-

the gms. His simplicity, however, and deference led him into an attention to others more artful than himself, who imposed upon his credulity, especially in religious matters.

By this means, though his fidelity remained unshaken, he relied at last in his writings too much on the opinions of others; and, these having been advanced too frequently to injure his reputation, he subscribed to the diminution of his own consequence, little suspecting he was the dupe of an imposition which he himself would have disdained to practise.

This and his popularity, lowered him deservedly in the judgment of the learned, for he grew careless and adopted any vulgar opinion so it served to procure him temporary admiration. Shewing that, difficult as it is to attain fame, 'tis much more difficult to preserve it. The most unfriendly, however, of his flatterers, who poisoned the chalice of praise they held up to him for his refreshment, and the most inveterate of his more honest, because more open enemies, have never, either by refined insinuation, or envious assertion, been able to withhold from him the impartial award of posterity which has confirmed him a firm philosopher, an elegant historian, a perfect moralist, and a good man.

But, if those already mentioned beget our warmest praise, and demand the admiration of posterity, what shall we say when we consider that this age also boasted the advantage of HOOKER'S incomparable merit; that exquisite improver of the English language, of whom Pope CLEMENT the eighth said, "this man, indeed, deserves the praise of an author. His books will get reverence by age; for there is in them such seeds of eternity, that they will continue till the last fire shall devour all learning."

Again, commanded by justice and truth, we cannot pass by sir WALTER RALEIGH; that great man, no less extraordinary for his eminent talents, than his unmeritted misfortunes; who, in proportion as he enlightened and instructed the world, experienced its ingratitude. He defeated the Spanish Armada, discovered a new country, and, as a warrior and a statesman, did his nation the most singular and important services, and in return was stripped of his preferment, loaded with ignominy, and condemned to die as a traitor.

The delight of his life being the good of his fellow creatures, he employed his time in the tower, where, after being reprieved, which was a sufficient

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The delight of his life being the good of his fellow creatures, he employed his time in the tower, where, after being reprieved, which was a sufficient

indication of his innocence, he was many years confined, in exploring the deepest recesses of literature. All subjects were alike to him, epistles, poetry, war, navigation, geography, politics, philosophy, and history, came with new lustre from his descriptive pen.

At length, his philanthropic and meritorious services having been felt and acknowledged, and the times demanding a more active exercise of such brilliant talents, he was called again into action; when, with the benignity and forgetfulness of injury only native in a great mind, he lost his anger in his patriotism, and rushed to succour his country. He achieved wonders, assisted by his son, who had the melancholy glory of losing his life like another MARCUS, fighting gallantly by the side of his father.

But the more brilliant his career, the more the fun of his glory engendered the venom of malignity. Were the circumstance not upon record it would not be believed; that a nation so full of splendid reputation, so celebrated for impartial justice, should so deface the monuments of its fame as to sacrifice the hero who reared them. Sir WALTER RAREIGH, being complained of to a weak king by an insidious foe, was given up to injustice for having

served his country ; and, when nothing could touch his life upon this unworthy accusation, that the measure of his injuries might be full, and the slanderous and envious might be glutted and gratified, he was beheaded for that former supposed crime, of which his innocence had been honourably manifested by a full pardon, and which pardon had been confirmed and ratified by an important and dignified command in the service of his country*.

I cannot wind up my account of historians at this period without mentioning the celebrated CAMDEN, who we may remember was preceptor to JONSON, and who seems to have flogged into him all that learning and ill nature for which he was so remarkable. *Britannia* is deservedly a work of great reputation. The origin, manners, and laws of the ancient Britons are there well described and sensibly commented on.

This English Pausanius, as he has been called,

* It is very material to the reputation of ELIZABETH, to notice that this ignominious and disgraceful stain to regal dignity did not happen in her reign. RALEIGH was not the only great character whose reputation, that had been fostered under her genial influence, chilled into night and winter when the sun of her patronage went down, and the indelible disgrace of putting this extraordinary man undeservedly to death is only one reproachful stigma, among many, that attached to JAMES, and that sunk the arts into gradual inaction,

took unwearied pains to celebrate all that was worthy, valiant, and great in the annals of his country; and, at the same time that he excited emulation in young minds, he formed them for great undertakings; for he was master of Westminster school, whence have issued so many divines, lawyers, warriors, and statesmen. His opinions were proudly looked up to, and his learning, his judgment, his universal knowledge, and the discharge of his professional duties, procured him the protection of his sovereign, the association of the great, and the admiration of the literati, who dignified him by the appellation of the great CAMDEN.

Going on I might instance GEORGE CAREW, earl of TOTNESS, who wrote the *History of the Wars in Ireland*, besides collecting several Chronologies, Letters, Charters, and Monuments, in four large manuscript volumes, which are still in the Bodleian Library at OXFORD, and Sir GEORGE CAREW, brother to lord TOTNESS, who was employed on embassies from ENGLAND to the courts of POLAND and FRANCE, whence he collected many historical particulars which he introduced into a work addressed to JAMES the first, though written and published originally in the reign of ELIZABETH, called *A Relation of the State of France, with the Characters*

of Henry the Fourth, and the principal Persons of that Court.

But, to wave all those branches of literature, for instance philosophy, in which, beside those mentioned and many others, ADAMSON conspicuously shone; who was to the philosophers of FRANCE what NEWTON was afterwards to DESCARTES. He escaped the massacre of PARIS, on the Feast of St. BARTHOLOMEW, by miracle, having been concealed in a house, the master of which was thrown into the street and dashed to pieces for having sheltered the Protestants. ADAMSON was archbishop of St. ANDREWS, and a great promoter of the works of LINDSAY, with whom he was joined in an important commission, so that the enmity among the churchmen, that LINDSAY drew down on him by his satirical writings, was in no respect imputable to or convived at by ADAMSON.

Putting by physic, rhetoric, the mathematics, and all the relative literary studies, I shall finish this subject by briefly touching on poetry, of which, speaking generally of the subject, I know not if SPENCER was not king. At any rate he felt himself a monarch; but being no more than poetically so, and, therefore, not able literally to command any subjects, he was determined figuratively to reign over more than all the monarchs of the earth. Thus

whole legions of fairies, goblins, and monsters appeared and disappeared at a stroke of that poetic sceptre his pen. Palaces, temples, and enchanted castles were built in the compass of a distich; and, to make the empire large enough for its inhabitants, the whole regions of fancy were chosen for his scenes of action. These with great felicity, he wrought to the wisest and best of purposes; and in the rewards and punishments of his different subjects, according to their virtues and vices, he has given a system of morality that will ever be an ornament to posterity. This morality is particularly advantageous by being conveyed in a style of the most brilliant fancy and most perfect truth.

His genius has been the admiration of all those who can feel and discriminate; and what defects may be found in him were attributable only to the early times he wrote in; all that barbarism having not yet been cleared away in which they were found by his predecessor CHAUCER, in whose steps he trod; but being possessed of more exalted abilities, he shewed the great distinction of genius by improving upon mind, rather than manner; for SPENCER manifested all the great soul of CHAUCER, without deigning servilely to confine himself to the contracted and narrow limits to which that great man had submitted: though, perhaps, more from necessity than inclination.

The fortunes of SPENCER were truly poetical; they resembled an April day, and were alternately chequered by clouds and sunshine. It is true he wore a laurel crown, but it was so barren, that it did not bear, for a considerable time, a single leaf; and when his affairs mended, it was more owing to the solicitations of those individuals to whom he was deservedly dear, than to his own personal merit.

Queen ELIZABETH, who accorded him his withering laurel, at length, by many solicitations, accorded him also what enabled him for a time to live comfortably. Of this, however, this king was dispossessed, and died in all the grief of low fortune and disappointment. He has left, however, queen who so sweetly sings his departed merits, that the mists of prejudice being now removed, his fame will live when those who have since attempted to endanger it, by vexatious cavilling, are forgotten.

SHAKESPEAR's talents having been almost wholly confined to dramatic poetry, it will be unnecessary to insist on them in this digressive part of the work, their influence claiming full notice in its body, of which they compose the vitals. JONSON also and the rest of the dramatic writers, for reasons some-

thing akin to these, need not be mentioned ; and it would be repetition to speak of DANIEL, RALEIGH, SIDNEY, or FAIRFAX. I shall, therefore, content myself with winding up the subject of literature in general by remarking, that, taking it in all points of view, I do not say the annals of the world cannot produce an era in which existed so much collective merit, but I think it out of doubt that no other age can boast three such men as BACON, SHAKESPEAR, and SPENCER.

CHAP. IX.

PAINTING.

THIS art which is said to have arisen among the Egyptians, and which, as in almost every other instance, the Greeks carried to perfection, was known later in ENGLAND to any extent or degree of excellence than in any other civilized country.

It is doubtful whether we can with any propriety pin our faith on the accounts of the very ancient painters. If we were to take implicitly what we are told to believe, we should place APOLLO, and ZEUXES, by the side of CORREGGIO, RAPHAEL, and REYNOLDS*, but this is impossible. The very

* It is ridiculous to think of what has been said of the ancient painters, POUSSIN used to say that RAPHAEL was an angel compared to the modern painters, but an ass compared to the ancients. In the first place the assertion must be false and contemptible; but, were it true, neither POUSSIN nor any other could possibly produce

colours could have flatly contradicted so absurd a belief; besides, as painting is the very art which can never attain complete perfection, nature being inimitable, it cannot possibly be, that in the barbarous age in which ALEXANDER massacred so many peaceable strangers, whose territories he laid in ruins, and whose comfort he destroyed, to gratify a frantic and useless ambition, that painting, which is a sober, studious art, and which can only thrive in civilized soil, could have attained any perfection, in spite of the story of the birds and the curtain, or the famous saying that there were two ALEXANDERS one invincible, sprung from the loins of PHILIP, and the other inimitable produced from the pencil of APELLES.

This cannot be better confirmed than by what actually happened in ITALY; where, previous to the incursions of the barbarians, painting flourished to, perhaps, a higher degree of reputation than

any proof of it, for what did they or do we know of the ancients by whom they mean APELLES, ZEUXIS, and the rest but by hearsay. Sculpture, reaching further into posterity, may be known. PHIDIAS and PRAXITELES we, perhaps, have some vestiges of. Stone and marble do not change colour, and they grow perfect among children of GUSTO by being mutilated; but what amateur, however invulnerable to imposition, can shew us a painting in high preservation, for that is the cant, of the same early date.

poetry. In the latter times of the republic, and under the first emperors, ROME had considerable masters; but, when the barbarians, with almost as much ferocity as ALEXANDER and his army, inundated ITALY, painting, so far from boasting a single APOLLO, shrunk into nothing and was reduced to its primitive elements.

In the age of JULIUS the second, and LEO the tenth, it began again to revive, and this revolution has given rise to the distinction of ancient and modern painting; the first comprehending the Greek and Roman painters, and the other that set who formed themselves into schools, and from whom alone, to say the truth, we have a right to date the perfection of this art. So that the usual mode of expressing ourselves, according to this, is a perversion of the original meaning; for we consider the painters who began to flourish under LEO the tenth as the ancients, which is in point of fact perfectly right; for, however, the art might before have been exercised to the admiration of those who were not civilized enough to judge of so elegant a study, and, however, it might have branched into partial streams in GREECE and ROME, there was no source, no fountain-head till it collected itself in ITALY.

CIMABUE in the thirteenth century with infinite

diligence collected the materials of painting, the very idea of which had then shrunk into obscurity; and the difficulty with which he obtained a very slight knowledge of what the art had been in GREECE is quite enough to shew, that what we pretend to know of it at present is built upon a shallow foundation indeed.

Some Florentines seconded the labours of CIMABUE, and to so good a purpose, that, though rude in the profession themselves, they knew so well the elements of it that their scholars soon became celebrated; the perfection of painting, therefore, may be dated from the latter part of the fifteenth century, at which time ANDREA PEROCCHIO was the master of LEONARDA DE VINCI, PIETRO PERUGINO OF RAPHAEL URBIN, and GHIRLANDAIO OF MICHAEL ANGELO.

Soon after this, as all the world knows, painting took such strides towards perfection; that, owing to the schools these great men established, ANGELO having set up his at FLORENCE, RAPHAEL at ROME, and VINCI at MILAN, it was carried to a pitch of excellence from which connoisseurs insist it has ever since been on the decline.

Certainly the talents of LEONARDA DE VINCI,

whose study was to diffuse that merit he so eminently possessed, who was the painter's preceptor, and the favourite of kings, by this time had made their rightful impression. MICHAEL ANGELO, who was considered as the greatest designer that ever existed, and acknowledged to know anatomy more perfectly than any man in the world, who sought perfection in solitude, and of whom it was said that painting was jealous and required the whole man to herself, by this time had added wonder to curiosity.

It is extraordinary that this great man was equally remarkable in painting, sculpture and architecture, and besides was a good poet. His statues, though few, were, however, admirable. His paintings were numerous, and are so well known that it would be an insult to his memory, and the taste of the connoisseurs, to describe their beauties, and his fame as an architect will remain while there is any vestige of St. PETER'S at ROME*, St. JOHN'S at FLORENCE, the Capitol, the Farnese Palace, or his own house.

* I must here give another proof how very indefinite all assertions are as to historical facts. Able authors insist that MICHAEL ANGELO built St. PETER'S at ROME, at the same time that they as positively insist it was built by RAPHAEL, at the express command of LEO the tenth. Perhaps my wisest way would have been to have sunk both assertions, but I thought it the fairest conduct to let them go as they are that my readers may judge for themselves.

RAPHAEL who deserves, perhaps, even stronger praise than his great cotemporaries had also to the other various perfections of painting added the graces. He has been styled the Prince of Painters and the divine RAPHAEL.

Du FRESNOY says, speaking of this wonderful man that "he surpassed all modern painters," still adhering to the old distinction of making the Greeks the ancients, "because he possessed more of the
" excellent parts of painting than any other; and
" it is believed that he equalled the ancients, excepting that he designed not naked bodies with
" so much learning as MICHAEL ANGELO; but
" his gusto of design is purer, and much better.
" He painted with not so good, so full, and so
" graceful a manner, as CORREGIO; nor has he
" any thing of the contrast of the lights and shadows,
" or so strong and free a colouring, as TITIAN;
" but he had without comparison a better disposition
" in his pieces, than either TITIAN, CORREGIO,
" MICHAEL ANGELO, or all the rest of the succeeding painters to our days. His choice of attitudes of heads, of ornaments, the suitableness of his
" drapery, his manner of designing, his varieties, his
" contrasts, his expressions, were beautiful in perfection; but above all, he possessed the graces in
" so advantageous a manner, that he has never since
" been equalled by any other."

The school of these three great masters confirmed the reign of painting so completely, that it could not but be diffused for ever through the world; for exclusive of the great number of pupils they turned out, those schools at length grew into a systematic establishment under the CARACCI; who, added to their own respective merits, have rendered their names illustrious by complimenting the world with such painters as GUIDO, DOMENECHINO, and LANFRANCO; thus continuing the study of painting in its most finished and perfect style almost up to the present time.

The influence of this art by this time was felt in remoter countries. ALBERT DURER, began to astonish GERMANY, HOLBENS, or HOLBEIN, SWITZERLAND, and LUCAS, HOLLAND. FRANCE, and FLANDERS had their painters, and ENGLAND felt a reflected glow from this warmth that diffused itself through the Continent, which kindled soon into a fire under the influence of sir THOMAS MORE, who introduced HOLBEIN to HENRY the eighth*.

* This introduction was very striking, and exhibits a certain proof that before that time painting had arrived to no perfection in ENGLAND. Sir THOMAS MORE invited the king to an entertainment; and, in the great hall of his house, hung up all the favourite pictures of HOLBEIN, disposed in the most advantageous situations

After the arrival of HOLBEIN, painting began to be better known in ENGLAND; and during the reign of ELIZABETH the names and productions of HEMSKIRK, who studied at ROME, and modelled himself upon the Italian school, and who, though not very deservedly, was called the RAPHAEL of HOLLAND and BREUGEL, whose drawings are said to be so correct that they cannot be copied, began to be known.

ELSHEIMER whose pictures are generally small landscapes, histories, or candlelight pieces with figures, and which are so remarkable for the prodigious labours and pains he bestowed upon them that they are so highly esteemed as only to be found in the cabinets of princes, was also a name that found its way into the court of ELIZABETH.

But OTHO VENIUS the master of RUBENS brought the taste of the English for painting much forwarder than it has been before. He studied at

they could be placed. The king was so delighted with the pictures that he requested to know if the artist was alive, and if any money would tempt him to reside in his court. This was the effect sir THOMAS wished the pictures to produce. HOLBEIN was introduced to the king, who took him into his service, and recommended him to the nobility, and thus it is that we have so many original paintings of HOLBEIN in this country.

ROME particularly under ZUCHERO, and afterwards returned to ANTWERP, where he ornamented the principal churches with his paintings. He had many tempting offers both from FRANCE and ENGLAND to leave his native country, but could never be prevailed upon; they were, therefore, obliged to be content with his pictures, which it may be easily conceived, as they formed RUBENS, were admirable objects of imitation for the painters of a country, in which the art was yet in its infancy as to its native artists.

That it was known, however, and that very universally, cannot be doubted; for we are generally given to understand that no less than fifteen thousand Flemish artists of different descriptions were settled in LONDON at the death of HENRY the eighth; and as at the head of the painters we have seen HOLBEIN the principal support at that time of the Flemish school, it is impossible but the art of painting must have been greatly admired, and of course imitated.

This importation of Flemish artists continued throughout the whole reign of ELIZABETH; and by this means, at second hand, the English had the satisfaction of becoming acquainted with the works

of GUIDO, TITIAN, JULIO ROMANO, and CORREGGIO; and, as many noblemen and ambaffadors had alfo imported pictures from ITALY, neither RAPHAEL nor his coterporaries were altogether unknown in ENGLAND.

CHAP X.

MUSIC.

HAVING already taking up the subject of GUIDO ARETINE, with a view to shew that his discoveries were the improvement, not the invention of music, I shall now speak of that theme, on which I always dwell with so much pleasure, by watching its progress onward from that period to the death of of ELIZABETH*.

* There are four great men of the name of ARETINE. The first GUIDO, is this inventor of music as he has been called. The second, LEONARD, was celebrated for eloquence, and had these words for an epitaph. " Since the death of LEONARD history is in mourning, " eloquence is become mute. The Greek and Latin Muses cannot " forbear shedding tears." The third, FRANCIS, was a great teacher, and such an expounder of law that he was called the Prince of Subtilties. He had such a vivacity of genius that his wit became a proverb. The fourth, PETER, was famous for his satirical writings. He was so bold as to venture invectives against kings; and, it was on this account that he got the title of the Scourge of Princes. He picqued himself on his lampoons, and said that they did more good to the world than sermons, and this judgment as his satire kept morality in view, obtained; but it at last led him into li.

I have shewn already that music is very ancient in this country ; but, that there may be no contest as to what it was any where before ARETINE, or in what manner its influence was conveyed to the heart, I shall now only take it up from his time, and keep to this spot, except any allusions should be necessary to throw a light on the subject.

Christianity introduced music into ENGLAND. " In tracing the progress of choral music in this country," says BEDE, " it is worthy of remark that as it was first established in the cathedral of CANTERBURY, when the first of the Roman singers settled on the conversion of the English to christianity, so that choir for a series of years produced a succession of men distinguished for their excellence in it. Among these, THEODORE the archbishop, and ADRIAN the abott, his friend and coadjutor, are particularly noted."

Thus music gained onward to WILLIAM the Conqueror, for this original establishment of music at CANTERBURY was in the eighth century. In the

centiousness which proved fatal to him ; and thus his enemies gained a complete triumph over him ; for, being delighted with some obscene and immoral conversation, he was seized with such a violent fit of laughter, that, overturning the chair, on which he sat, he fell upon his head and received such a blow that he died upon the spot,

reign of that monarch lived a man named OSBERN, though BALE places him a century backward, to whom is attributed as much as to ARETINE, nay, this author says that ARETINE was only his follower. This man was much favoured by LANFRANC bishop of CANTERBURY, and is spoken of as one profoundly skilled in the science of music. He left behind him a treatise which has thrown many new lights on harmony; but it is so crude, indigested, and abstruse, that, like many other things on that subject, it were better that it had never been written.

There can be no doubt, however, that, except the native and wild melodies which were the characteristic of the national music here as they were every where else, that what was called music scientifically was little more than the gregorian chant, so often mentioned, and which certainly made up the essence of the recitative of LULLY.

St. BERNARD, who lived in the twelfth century, has endeavoured to simplify this species of music, and, as he calls it, "correct the folly of those who depart from the rules of melody." He complains, as any man of taste would do who lives at this day, of the foppery and irregularity of teachers, who promulgate absurdity and consecrate error.

“ But,” says he, “ they say it is done by a kind of
“ musical licence. What sort of licence is this,
“ which, walking in the region of dissimilitude, in-
“ troduces confusion and uncertainty, the mother
“ of presumption and the refuge of error? I say
“ what is this liberty which joins opposites and goes
“ beyond natural land marks; and which, as it im-
“ poses an inelegance on the composition, offers an
“ insult to nature.”

This man who knew and felt that nothing se-
conds devotion like music, did not wish that the
priests should introduce schisms for the ears any
more than for mind. Indeed his labours were in-
defatigable to root out imposition in both; neither,
however, succeeded to his wish, though in both he
wrought some reform, but imposition is the essence
of professors of sciences as well as of religion; and
while by deception money may be got little con-
science will be made of passing off fallacy for truth,
and art for nature.

Music was in the thirteenth century so favourite
a topic that it employed the pens of many eminent
authors. WALTER MONK, of EVESHAM, a man
as well of lively wit as of sincere devotion, for these
qualities are certainly not incompatible, wrote a sen-
sible work which he called *Of the Speculation of*

Musical. The celebrated ROGER BACON, who was complimented on account of his extraordinary talents with the title of Magician, under a general belief that his transcendent abilities must have been supernatural, and whose brazen head has so often infused terror into the minds of the ignorant, that he might leave no science untreated, wrote a work which he called *De Valore Musices*.

SIMON TAILLER, a dominican, and a Scotchman, JOHANNES PEDIASIMUS, and several others, were also at this period musical writers; but it would be trivial to notice more than that it was a part of the clerical duty to know the principles of harmony, and this clearly proves in what manner the Clerks who exhibited at Clerkenwell came to be qualified to represent the Mysteries, which consisted of singing as well as dialogue.

But this is not all. Music was not only known to the laity, but taught them by the churchmen, who very sensibly and properly softened the more rigorous duties of religious worship by permitting innocent relaxations of this kind, especially among the youthful part of both sexes, who very naturally and laudably indulged in that vivacity which softened their labour and taught them to know content.

Thus such songs and ballads as suited their situations and talents, in ENGLAND as in every other country, became the delight and the solace of the wretched, the luxury of the indolent, and the relaxation of the thrifty; all which, were proof necessary, might be traced back to very remote times but we have no time nor occasion for the search.

To shew, however, that nothing could be more common and familiar than music, it made up the delight of the people in the fourteenth century. The carpenter's wife in CHAUCER'S *Miller's Tale* is courted to the music of the sautrie, by her lover NICHOLAS the scholar of OXFORD. Her other lover, ABSOLON the parish clerk, sings to his geterne, and his ribible. All this has been remarked by an ingenious author who says "if so many arts were necessary to win the heart of a carpenter's wife, what musical accomplishments must be requisite to gain the affections of females in higher life."

CAMDEN speaks of the music of these times, and notices that the poetry, which was evidently comic, and which he calls "bobbing rhimes," though they were levelled at the vices of the clergy, were written by clergymen. He tells us of WALTER de MASSES, and says that, though in the reign

of HENRY the second, he filled all ENGLAND with his meriments, he was archdeacon of OXFORD; so that poets of all descriptions very sensibly contributed to the public amusement by courting the best possible assistance their writings could profit by.

In the fifteenth century these ditties were multiplied into a prodigious number; CHAUCER's ballads, of which he composed many, were in great vogue, as were also those of LYDGATE, and other writers. JOHN SHIRLEY, in the year 1440, made a large collection of these which were published under the title of "A Boke cleped the abstracte
" brevyaire, compyled of diverse ballades, roundels,
" virilays, tragedyes, envoys, complaints, moralities,
" storyes practysed, and eke devysed and ymaged,
" as it sheweth here following, collected by JOHN
" SHIRLEY."

It is imagined that the tunes of these songs are all lost, but I cannot be induced to believe it, and I should not wonder on the contrary, if many of them were familiar to us at this moment. Who knows the origin *Derry Down*, *Oh Ponder Well*, and many others, which will never be forgot. We know that in some of the madrigals, which were composed in this and the following century, the

Italian school, in its highest prosperity, never produced any thing, either for melody or harmony, more beautiful.

The earliest authority it is acknowledged that we have of a positive tune, and the name of its composer, is to a song of CHAUCER beginning, "I have a lady." It was composed by CORNYSH in the reign of HENRY the eighth, but this weighs nothing with me. When I consider that one of the sweetest combinations of melody and harmony that ever adorned the sweetest of all studies was composed as nearly as possible to that very time, I cannot be awake and believe that music, even in that reign, was not in the highest perfection, or at least that there were not composers that unconsciously excelled the productions of ITALY; for it is impossible to deny that it is a higher compliment to the reputation of a composer to be known by "How merrily we live," the glee that I allude to, than by the most abstruse church composition that ever was composed.

It is not therefore, certain, because we know of no tunes written down and handed forward that we are not in possession of them. There cannot be a doubt but nurses and other common people have learned them of one another from time immemorial;

and, by the same token, when the beautiful melodies which are now our favourites, shall be sung familiarly and with pleasure two hundred years hence by all those who have hearts and ears, it will be little conjectured that they owe the delight they receive to PURCELL, ARNE, and BOYCE.

According to this, I don't care for what is treasured up, I care for what is universally known; and my reason particularly is, that what is treasured up is scientific, and what is universally known is natural, one is ingenuity, and the other genius, one art, and the other nature; and thus, upon the same principle that oral tradition has done much more for history than record, so memory must infallibly have done more for music than notation, and if I am asked, having no chronicled proof of this assertion, how I can maintain it, I shall answer that the fact is as unerring as any other fixed criterion in nature; and that, though I did not see the sun shine two hundred years ago, I can with safety insist that his beams were as radiant, and his career as glorious as at this moment.

At the same time I do not blame the diligence of those who have taken pains to ascertain what vestiges there are of ancient music in this country, and one of my reasons is, that in so doing, they may

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fall in the way of materials that might shame the music of any other country, I have given one strong instance of this, and shall by and by produce other instances. In the mean time, that I may not get too forward, I shall make some remarks on music in the fourteenth century.

It has been well noticed, by an ingenious and elegant writer, that nothing has given so complete an insight into the character of music, at this remote period, as the writings of BOCCACE and CHAUCER. *The Ten Tales* of BOCCACE contained in his *Decameron*, are not only entirely dramatic, but of that particular species that might be immediately formed into operas; so are the *Canterbury Tales* of CHAUCER. The materials are perfectly adapted for music; and, to shew how nearly poetry and music are allied, and in their nature bear the same locality, the subjects BOCCACE has chosen are elegant and refined, such would best suit Italian music, at that time regular and scientific, and those of CHAUCER common and natural, such as suited the plain simplicity of English music, in which last character, by the bye, is sometimes contained a sublimity beyond science.

After a plague at FLORENCE, BOCCACE makes seven ladies, of noble birth and honourable principles, propose to retire to a distance for fear of in-

fection, and to deplore the misfortunes of the times; but, lest they should too rigidly indulge their melancholy they determine to invite three gentlemen, also of birth and honour, to accompany them. The scheme is put into execution; their little retreat becomes a perfect paradise; and, among other things, to beguile the time, they each relate a story.

But this is not all, we are told that this company sung, danced, and played upon various instruments; and we are given to understand that they introduced the story of *Palamon and Arcite*, which we may remember so delighted queen ELIZARETH, and other novels, and that they even called in their servants to personate the clowns and under parts, who accompanied themselves with the bagpipe, while others played the lute and the viol; hence we have clearly the origin of the Italian opera.

CHAUCER, who went for simplicity as BOCCACE did for elegance, chose a more common and more homely vehicle. He supposes twenty-nine persons of both sexes, of as different employments and characters as the most fertile imagination could suggest, together with himself, making in all thirty, who set out from the Tabarde Inn in the Borough*, on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. THOMAS

* This inn was formerly the lodging of the abbot of HYDE near

a BECKET, at CANTERBURY. Among these are a squire, his son, and his servant; a prioress, a nun, a monk, a merchant, a clerk of OXFORD, a serjeant at law, a haberdasher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, a cook, a ploughman, a miller, and other characters equally well contrasted.

Each of these characters is to tell two tales in the way to CANTERBURY, and two on their return. They cast lots who shall begin and the first lot falls on the knight, who tells the story of *Palamon and Arcite*, from which EDWARDS took his play which has been already noticed*.

WINCHESTER, the sign was a Tarbarde, a word signifying a short jacket, or sleeveless coat, whole before, open on both sides, with a square collar and hanging sleeves. STOW tells us that from the wearing of this garment some of those on the foundation at Queen's College are called Taberdarii. The servants of their respective masters walked in coats of this form in procession from the Middle Temple to Westminster Hall, at the general call of serjeants in 1736. The host of this inn at the time of CHAUCER was named BAILLIE. His character is admirably drawn, and the humour of it greatly heightened by his having a termagant for his wife. DRYDEN delights in this idea, and says that from the truth and variety thrown into the different descriptions of CHAUCER's characters, "he was enabled to form an idea of the humours, the features, nay the very dress of the pilgrims as distinctly as if he had supped with them at the Tabarde at Southwark."

* Having mentioned DRYDEN's own opinion of CHAUCER. It may not be amiss to relate what he says of COWLEY, who never could bear the idea of that great poet. With as much wonder as

In those tales, not only the music of those times is particularly described, but the names of the instruments are enumerated on which the performers were accustomed to play. The lute, the rote, the fiddle, the sautrie, the bagpipe, the getron, the ribble, the citole, and the flute, were instruments in common use*, and from many lines in the prologues

pity, DRYDEN says, "I have often heard the late earl of LEICESTER say that Mr. COWLEY was of opinion that CHAUCER was a dry old fashioned wit not worth receiving; and that, having read him over at my lord's request, he declared he had no taste of him." Perhaps COWLEY would have liked him if he had introduced a few more expletives. The author, whose work has put me in mind of this remark of DRYDEN, speaks of another circumstance equally as extraordinary, which is, that HANDEL make no scruple of declaring himself insensible as to the music of PURCELL. That PURCELL very often found above HANDEL is a truth; but that HANDEL did not taste what he loved and studied cannot be truth. Perhaps envy represented CHAUCER to COWLEY, through the veil of affectation and quaintness, and PURCELL to HANDEL, through the fog of fugue and counterpoint.

* SPEIGHT supposes the rote to signify an instrument used in WALES, but it has been contended that SPEIGHT has mistaken the word for crota, or crowd. Dr. JOHNSON, however, with the assistance of SPENCER, has set the matter right by shewing that it means a harp. SPENCER's words are,

Worthy of great PPEBUS' rote,
The triumphs of PHLEGREAN JOVE he wrote,
That all th. gods admired his lofty note.

The sautrie is evidently a corruption from psaltery, and getron is the cittern, and the citole is unquestionably the dulcimer.

to the different stories we learn by what sort of persons these instruments were played upon. The prologue to the squire's tale says,

He coude songes make and wel endite
 Juste *, and eke daunce; portray and wel write.

So that we find the son of a knight educated in a manner suitable to his birth, was able to write, dance, portray, and make verses, nay, and to add music to his verses, if the term to make songs may be so understood and so of the rest †. But many other instruments were used at that time as may be seen by the following list of performers who attended EDWARD the third, five trompettes, one cyteler, five pipers, one tabrete, one mabre, two clarions, one fedeller, three waightes.

* Justs were tilts and tournaments.

† It may not be unentertaining to notices that the manner of the time in which CHAUCER lived are well delineated in these Tales. We learn from them that a haberdasher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, and a maker of tapestry, were in the rank of such citizens as had expectation of becoming Lord Mayor of LONDON; and that their wives in consequence were called Madams. That cooks were great cheats, and would dress the same meat more than once. That the masters of ships were pirates, and made it no case of conscience to steal the wine out of the vessels of their chapmen while they lay asleep, that physicians, to appear more wise and more incomprehensible, made astrology a part of their study, that weaving of cloth was a very profitable trade, and that there was a manufactory of that kind near Bath, and that bigotry was so prevalent that even the wife of a weaver would not scruple to make a pilgrimage to ROME, or JERUSALEM.

This will be sufficient to shew that music, in its native simplicity, and therefore in its truest beauty, was known and admired in the fourteenth century, and that in proportion as poetry became familiar it of course called for the assistance of this its auxiliary; thus there can be no doubt but we should at this moment be able to ascertain the very airs sung in common from EDWARD the third to HENRY the eighth, many of which I have no doubt we know, but are unconscious of their dates, were it not that notation was rendered obsolete by the reformation; which, as it destroyed every vestige of the manuscriptal church music at the dissolution of the monasteries, so of course it had no more mercy upon the laical.

Indeed many other reasons concurred to render ancient notation useless. Printing, though it had gone a very extensive length towards embellishing literature, had not yet extended to music. Every character used for the purpose of rendering sound upon paper had been borrowed from the Roman ritual, and circulated in manuscript. Types now set the matter to rights; and, as every inventor is fond of illustrating his discoveries as amply and variously as possible, what wonder of notation should

to the different stories we learn by what sort of persons these instruments were played upon. The prologue to the squire's tale says,

He coude songes make and wel endite
 Juste *, and eke daunce, portray and wel write.

So that we find the son of a knight educated in a manner suitable to his birth, was able to write, dance, portray, and make verses, nay, and to add music to his verses, if the term to make songs may be so understood and so of the rest †. But many other instruments were used at that time as may be seen by the following list of performers who attended EDWARD the third, five trompettes, one cyteler, five pipers, one tabrete, one mabre, two clarions, one fedeller, three waightes.

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be conveyed with encreasing elegance, till, at last, it arrived to the form in which we now see it.

On this account those compositions, for which English composers have been so celebrated, and particularly their madrigals, were not made known till early in the sixteenth century; that is to say, in such a form as to be transmitted on to us, for that they were common and in high estimation is indubitable, but being written in odd parts, without bars, and with ligatures, it is impossible for us to fix on them so precise a character as to form any judgment of the melodies or the relation the parts have to each other.

In this case, though we must implicitly give credit to that genius and that knowledge which were as completely known in that early period in ENGLAND as every where else, yet no certainty as to their particular operation can attach to our assertions till HENRY the eighth; who, by destroying the convents and with them the books and manuscripts found there, obliged music to shift for itself; which, being a child of nature, acquired strength and beauty from that emancipation.

We shall be led, however, by this means to some

certainly as to composers in the fifteenth century; for not only the madrigals that were invented after the new notation were at that time printed, but many of the old ones were made to assume this more perfect form, and, therefore, are preserved even to this day. "*Sumer is Icumen*, a celebrated madrigal for six voices, the manuscript of which is now in the British Museum, was composed about 1460. SKELTON, in the reign of HENRY the seventh, wrote songs, which were composed in parts by CORNISH, and many others might be mentioned.

FRANCHINUS, who wrote a work which was printed at MILAN, gives some of the first examples for the improvement of musical notation, but these characters were cut out in blocks; the Germans, however, improved upon this practice, and that art seems to have arrived to something like perfection about the year 1500, so that this improvement seemed ready for the use it was put to afterwards in ENGLAND; but it came to no perfection till about 1560, when a very industrious man, of the name of JOHN DAY, published the Church Service in four and three parts. His labours were a good deal accelerated by STERHOLD and HOPKINS; who, in addition to the novelty of introducing their New Version of the Psalms, brought forth the Cantiones of TALLIS and BIRD, two names of sufficient con-

sequence to shew the reputation of music at that time, their Anthems at this moment being held very highly in esteem, as to their ingenuity, admitted among the common cathedral stock, and as well known as the works of any other church composers*.

This DAY most industriously and laudably, together with another printer of the name of VAUTROLLIER, brought to public view whatever could be found of value, and, therefore, I should not wonder, though the fact cannot be ascertained, that many of the madrigals, ascribed to the com-

* The history of Psalmody at that time sets us perfectly clear as to the nature of the melodies then known and admired in ENGLAND. The Psalm tunes, or at least many of them, came from the Germans; and when STERNHOLD and HOPKINS published their Version, with the tunes set forth in types, they from them and from the English composers got together a great number of those tunes. These, up to this moment, fix the criterion of that melody which is the most simple, the most impressive, and the most sublime, because it consists of a few notes, and nothing can be advanced to invalidate the antiquity of those tunes, because, the best in the collection, the hundredth Psalm, was composed by MARTIN LUTHER, and is literally a melody derived from inspiration, and clogged with no extraneous harmony, but merely assisted by such modulation as the melody itself dictated. So that, as far as it goes, we see the utmost of musical perfection in LUTHER; for I'll venture to say, that we might name fifty musicians, and some that we have heard praised too, whose works altogether, in point of intrinsic merit, are not equal in value to the hundredth Psalm. LUTHER died in 1546.

posers of that time, are in fact of a much earlier date.

DAY and VAUTROLLIER were succeeded by THOMAS ESTE; who, for some reason or other, changed his name to SNODHAM. BIRD and MORLEY were afterwards granted a patent as sole and exclusive printers of music. This patent was assigned to others; but printed music came to no perfection, except merely as to the form of the notes, till it was stamp'd and engraved*.

Gathering assistance from printing, writers on music were now better enabled to exemplify their arguments, and in consequence we became more familiar with them and their works. Musicians took their degrees at the universities, and their merit was known, and decided. German and Italian productions spread over EUROPE, and it became then a positive and fixed point, as it has ever since remained, that ITALY was the school for vocal music, and Germany the school for instrumental music.

* The art of printing music with metal types obtained in ITALY about 1516, and was carried to some perfection by OTTAVIO de PETRICCI; and, in France, it was improved by PIERRE BALLARD. The Germans, however, were, no doubt, the inventors of types, although music had been long printed in ITALY with blocks, which, after all, gives the truest idea of music as it is now printed.

ENGLAND, in addition to its own native melodies; which, like the minds of its inhabitants, facinate by their open and unaffected manner of appealing to the heart, adopted whatever might serve to assist music from foreign aid; and it has ever been a rule with all real musical judges, that the vocal music of this country has received advantage from the Italian school, and the instrumental from the German, and that whenever the contrary has been attempted, which has happened but too often, to the creation of schisms and controversies out of number, taste has been vitiated, and nature and the heart have been sacrificed at the shrine of affectation and caprice.

The works of ARON, RAMIS, AGRICOLA, and other German writers, have dived into all the perplexity of harmony. AGRICOLA, in particular, so lost himself in his own labyrinth, that, in the republication of his famous work, called *Musica Instrumentales*, he confesses to a friend that the first edition was so difficult to be understood, that few could read it to any advantage, and yet this author is said to have written for young beginners. He would not, however, have apologized to his friend if he had lived in these times; for the practice still prevails, and young beginners are set down to study what nobody can understand without any apo-

logy at all; but the best part of the story is that this abstruse treatise, published for the use of young beginners, which the author confesses that few could understand, is written in verse. It is a pity, while he was about it, but he had set it to music, and so joined impossible precept with impracticable example.

The Italians, who were celebrated in the sixteenth century, have left behind them several works of considerable reputation. ZARLINO, PALESTRINA, MARENZIO, NANINO, and ANERIO are among this number; and, to shew that the fascinating power of music can level all distinctions, the Prince DI VENOSA was musical rival and competitor to SETHUS CALVISIUS, the son of a peasant. SALINAS and MORALES, though both Spaniards, as they knew nothing but what they imbibed from the Italian school, ought, properly speaking, to be classed with the Italian writers.

ZARLINO, who was born in 1540, was intended by his parents for some learned profession, and by nature for any study of which the human mind is capable; but music bounded his ambition. He was maestro di capella of St. MARK's Church, and composed several celebrated things, and in particular the rejoicings at VENICE upon the defeat of the Turks at LEPANTO.

By having possessed much good sense and treasured up a fund of general knowledge, ZARLINO felt himself more competent to speak on the subject of music than any writer of his time, and this is clearly proved by what he has given to the world, for he has entered into no pityful controversies but gone at large into his theme. He at once traces music back to the Greeks, and from the Greeks to nature its original parent; and thus, while he shews as much competency to argue as BOETIUS, and all the other Latin and Italian writers, he adds arguments of his own to shew that the dignity of music is derived from its simplicity.

GALILEI the pupil so ZARLINO, set himself up against his master, calling him the corrupter of music, and ZARLINO answered GALILEI in a strain of cool irony, in which he calls him his loving disciple. The question in dispute was concerning the division of tones, which it would be both improper and unnecessary to explain here. The essence of the argument was that ZARLINO was an advocate for nature and his pupil for art, and it is remarkable that the partizans on each side have settled the question in favour of music and ZARLINO, one by the strength and the other by the weakness of their arguments, the first of which has obtained to this day, and the latter long sunk into oblivion.

SALINAS, whose soul was music, wrote very warmly on his favourite theme. The misfortune is that music is so extensive an expression that you may apply it to any thing; and thus, by stretching the qualities it really possesses, its admirers, out of zeal, attempt to fit them to what they cannot embrace; thus, at length, they quit music for proportion, and at last, proportion for calculation, so that sound, without which there cannot be music, is put out of the question, and the argument becomes a mere wrangle upon paper.

SALINAS was blind, and he gives this as the reason for devoting himself to music. His own words are, "From my very infancy I devoted myself to
" to the study of music; for, as I had sucked in
" blindness from the infected milk of my nurse, and
" there remaining not the least hope that I should
" ever recover my sight, my parents could think of
" no employment so proper for me as that which
" was now suitable to my situation, as the learning
" necessary for it might be acquired by the sense of
" hearing, that other best servant of a soul endued
" with reason."

PALESTRINA took a likely career to become a good musician, not for scholars, but for the world;

for he studied under a singer in the pontifical chapel, who established a school for vocal music, and thus having originally imbibed melody, he made it the ground work of all his studies.

“ This great genius,” says an Italian author,
“ guided by a peculiar faculty, the gift of GOD,
“ adopted a style of harmony so elegant, so noble,
“ so learned, so easy, and so pleasing, both to the
“ connoisseur and the ignorant, that in a mass, com-
“ posed on purpose, sung before Pope MAR-
“ CELLUS CERVINUS, and the sacred college of
“ cardinals, he made that pontiff alter the intention
“ he had of enforcing the bull of JOHN the twenty-
“ second, which abolished entirely church music,
“ under the penalty of excommunication. This
“ ingenious man, by his astonishing skill, and the di-
“ vine melody of that mass, was appointed by PAUL
“ the fourth, perpetual composer and director in
“ the pontifical chapel; a dignity which has been
“ vacant ever since his death. This mass was
“ now and ever will be performed as long as there
“ is a world in the sacred temples at ROME, and at
“ all other places where they have been so fortu-
“ nate as to procure the compositions of such a
“ wonderful genius, whose works breathe divine
“ harmony, and enable us to sing in a style so truly
“ sublime the praises of our maker.”

PALESTRINA no doubt carried into better effect the idea of ZARLINO, taking simplicity and nature for his guide; and I think there can be but little doubt that from this period the Italian and German schools adopted the studies which have since separately distinguished them, PALESTRINA having in his works cured the Italians of obtruseness by exposing the corrupt errors of the Germans, who having little genius substituted art for nature, and they, conscious of their inability, having quietly acquiesced in the decision, and contented themselves with phlegmatic harmonies, squared and calculated, divested of melody, and, therefore, like a body without a soul, while rich melody and the simple and dignified harmony that naturally belongs to it marked the productions of the Italians.

NANINO, was a fellow student of PALESTRINA. They between them established a school for the study of music, which was frequented by many eminent professors, and particularly by a younger brother of NANINO, who distinguished himself as a wonderful genius, NANINO, the elder, published some very fine madrigals.

ANERIO, a disciple of NANINO, was the immediate successor of PALESTRINA as composer to the pontifical chapel, the office of director having died

with its exclusive possessor. His professional character stood very high, and he as well as VELETTI, PONTIO, VECCHI, and others, produced many musical compositions of great celebrity.

But of all the Italian composers in the sixteenth century, MARENZIO is most generally known to us, many of whose madrigals were adapted to English words, and published by THOMAS WATSON in 1589, in a work called *Musica Transalpina*; among these are "Farewell cruel and unkind," "What doth my pretty darling," "Sweet singing AMARYLLIS," and "I must depart all hapless." With MARENZIO I shall finish this summary account of the Italian and German schools, although there are are more than ninety other names behind of much celebrity.

It is remarkable, that except ITALY, GERMANY, FLANDERS, and ENGLAND, music had made no considerable progress in the sixteenth century. SPAIN had produced only MORALES and SALINAS, and these were fairly of the Italian school, and in FRANCE we hear of De PREZ, MOUTON, CREQUILLON, and CLAUDE, but nothing is known of them worthy of being recorded.

IN ENGLAND, TYE, BIRD, BULL, and Dow-

LAND, were long in such high estimation that it has been contended they were equal to the best musicians of any country. MARBECK, however, was the earliest of the English composers of any considerable eminence; who, after having narrowly escaped the stake for heresy, or according to Fox, after having actually suffered, he became indefatigable to reform music with religion. Indeed the cathedral musical service of the Church of England was originally framed by MARBECK, and the notes of the preces, suffrages, and responses, as they are at this day, were of his composition.

TYE was brought up in the Chapel Royal, and musical preceptor to the children of HENRY the eighth. He was a man of learning; and, after taking the degree of Doctor in Music at CAMBRIDGE, was incorporated a member of the University of OXFORD. He was afterwards organist to the Chapel Royal of ELIZABETH, and was the first who composed anthems.

This was occasioned by a kind of accident. He set the Acts of the Apostles to music; but, the subject being principally narrative and relation, it clearly had nothing to do with music, and, therefore, did not succeed. Correcting his error, he then turned his thoughts to such words in scripture as

might answer his purpose; and, recollecting that the Psalms of DAVID are full of that thanksgiving, and that ebullition of the heart which music is so particularly calculated to express, he made some essays in this way, which were not only received with great encomiums by their hearers, but they have served ever since as a model for the imitation of composers in that style.

WOOD, speaking of TYE, says his music was antiquated and of very little value; but BOYCE, with the true liberality of a real genius, refutes this calumny in the best possible way by publishing one of his anthems, "I will exalt thee," which for melody, harmony, expression, contrivance, and general effect, is a perfect model of church composition.

TALLIS followed TYE. He composed wholly for the church; indeed he has been called the father of the cathedral style, and considered by some as a better composer than PALESTRINA; who, as we have seen, was his cotemporary. This, however, must not be allowed. No man could be more original than TALLIS, as we are told; but this is not the proper expression, unless originality may be defined an improvement on the labours of others, for TALLIS built his music upon the foundation of

the old English cathedral composers, and the Germans, all of whom he excelled; but this cannot be considered as that sort of originality which PALESTRINA's biographer properly calls the gift of GOD; and thus it is that while TALLIS was lost in the ancient modes, designated by EUCLID and PTOLEMY, which are now exploded, PALESTRINA was inspired with the melody of nature which will last for ever.

BIRD, in the earlier part of his life wholly composed church music; but, when madrigals became to be so greatly in vogue that no person was esteemed fashionable who could not take a part in them at sight*, he conformed to the taste of the times. To confirm this the first of his publications was called, "Psalms, Songs, and Sonets of Sadness and Piety," and his last, "Songs and Sonets, some solemne, others joyful, formed to the Life of the Words."

* MORLEY in his introduction makes a scholar give this reason for learning music, "Being at a banquet," says he, "supper being ended, and music books, according to custom, being brought on the table, the mistress of the house presented me with a part and earnestly requested me to sing; but when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder, yea, some whispered to others demanding how I was brought up. So that for shame of mine ignorance I now go to seek mine old friend master GNORIMUS to make myself his scholar."

Besides madrigals and merry sonnets, BIRD seems to have been the first who composed lessons for the virginals, which consisted of nothing more than variations on well known country dances; so that the modern practice of composers who adopt the melodies of others because they have no invention themselves, have done nothing new in palming this second hand ware upon their scholars.

It was meritorious enough, however, in BIRD, for his business at that early time was to bring simple melodies into fashion, and thus we see ladies of quality patronizing familiar music, till by and by it grew so simplified that many of those beautiful airs which we now admire in the *Beggars Opera*, fixed the criterion of the English taste.

In a collection of these lessons, which were dedicated to lady NEVILLE, and composed for her use, and which we are told, though produced at that early period, are very difficult to execute, he has rung the changes on "St. Leger," or as it is commonly called, "Sellenger's Round," "Have with you to Walsingham," "The World runs on Wheels," "Packington Pound," and some others; all which together with his two celebrated madrigals, "La Verginella e Simile un Rosa," and "This sweet and merry month of May," shew that

BIRD must have done a great deal towards polishing the general taste for music.

After all, however, church music and works of the learned cast were principally the favourite study of BIRD; though, except in a few instances, posterity will have more obligations to him for his lighter compositions, notwithstanding many learned opinions to the contrary. His service which, with a diligence honourable to himself and his profession, was preserved by BOYCE, and some other compositions are greatly creditable to this composer.

But the production that has established the reputation of BIRD, I hope, upon a right foundation, is the famous Canon, "Non nobis Domine." The Italians positively say that it is the composition of PALESTRINA; it is allowed on all hands that it has been long deposited in the Vatican Library, and those who argue on this side of the question maintain their position by saying that the subject was wrought into a concerto and published at AMSTERDAM by CARLO RICCIOTTI, with a note mentioning that the fugue is taken from a Canon of PALESTRINA. Now, unfortunately, this concerto is extant and the fugue is worked from Non nobis Domine; and, if the general ideas of an ingenious man may

be adduced as evidence in his favour, the composition of *PALESTRINA* beginning "Sicut cervus desiderat," and the canon in question seem to have emanated from the same mind.

On the side of *BIRD* it is argued that *HILTON* has positively published this canon as his, and Dr. *PEPUSCH*, whose researches certainly were very diligent and useful, has ascribed it to him in a very unqualified manner, and besides this, collateral proof has been brought that it was the natural bent of *BIRD*'s disposition, and that, though he did now and then make variations upon country dances to oblige lady *NEVILLE*, church music and compositions of the more serious kind were his best delight, and what he was most qualified for. They are, however, obliged to allow that it was never published in any of his works; which, as it is so admirable a composition is not only unfortunate but rather extraordinary, and thus it remains a moot point whether *BIRD* or *PALESTRINA* was the composer of *Non nobis Domine*.

I shall next mention *FERABOSCO*; who, though of Italian parents, was born in *ENGLAND*. *MORLEY* speaks very highly of his merit and says that he and *BIRD* had many friendly trials of skill in music. In two instances *FERABOSCO* bore away the palm,

one of these begins with the words, "The nightingale so pleasant and so gay," and the other, "I saw my lady weeping."

Indeed English music has many obligations to this man, his son, and another of his family. Many of our best melodies which PEPUSH so judiciously selected for the Beggars Opera are supposed to have arisen from that source, and those in the minuet style in particular have so simple and pure an elegance, that as long as there is a world, as PALESTRINA's panegyrist says, that world will be delighted with them.

BLITHEMAN, whom STOW in his survey not only has thought it worth his while to mention by name, but of whom he has printed the epitaph at length, was also celebrated at this time, but more as a teacher than a composer. The whitest feather, however, in his wing was his being preceptor to DR. BULL, whose christian name, by the bye, was JOHN. He was a celebrated musician admitted first as Bachelor of Music at OXFORD, afterwards as Doctor at CAMBRIDGE, and, at length, appointed organist of the Queen's Chapel.

BULL was the first Gresham professor of music; being, however, as his christian name bespeaks him

a plain Englishman, he was unable to read his lectures in Latin. The queen, therefore, gave him an especial permission to deliver them in English, for which she has been ridiculed under an absurd idea that if he did not know Latin he could not know music.

JOHN, still like a true Englishman, travelled for improvement; and, having heard of a famous musician at St. OMER's, he placed himself under him as a novice, but he soon found, as is generally the truth in such cases, that he knew more than his master. Among other proofs of this, the musician shewed him a song that he had composed in forty parts, telling him at the same time that he would defy all the world to produce any person capable of adding another part to his composition. BULL desired to be left alone and to be indulged for a short time with pen and ink, and in less than three hours added forty parts more to this song, upon which the Frenchman swore in a great extacy that he must be either the Devil or JOHN BULL.

Whether the musician had heard of the story of ERASMUS and Sir THOMAS MORE, or whether as it has happened in many other cases he felt the influence of JOHN BULL's superiority, has not exactly been ascertained, but the historian insists that, though

a priest, upon BULL's making himself known, he actually fell down and adored him.

DOWLAND, of whom SHAKESPEAR speaks in one of his poems, was a good composer, and a famous player on the lute. He was a great traveller, and his passion being music, he brought back the taste of other countries into this, and thus added some variety to the lighter compositions which were then the delight of all societies.

PETER PHILIPS who because he studied abroad italianized his name into PIETRO PHILIPPI, was considered as an admirable musician. He certainly improved the English taste by sending over airs from ITALY. Indeed ENGLAND was greatly obliged to these ramblers, for by importing now and then a little of the Italian taste they better guarded their countrymen against the incursions of the Germans, whose arithmetical music sometimes gained ground, to the corruption of that truth and nature which in this country was at that time really felt and understood.

MORLEY, who was a pupil of BIRD, wrote a treatise on music through which we get a good deal at the professors and admirers of that art, and their abilities and taste. It is written dialogue-wise; and

in the course of the conversations between the interlocutors, many particulars occur relative to the times, which clearly shew the merit of music and the estimation it was then held in.

MORLEY intends this treatise for reproof as well as instruction; for, knowing the inconvenience of studying scientifically as it is called, how much it bewilders the imagination, and makes that a toil which only ought to be a pleasure, he warns his scholars against venturing too far. "What would you learn?" Says the master. The scholar says he has heard a friend of his who is the best descant in the world, and begs he may be taught descant. The master answers that it will require time and patience, that the word is hardly defined, and, in short, does what he can to dissuade him from it, but to no purpose; descant was the foppery of music then, just as cadence and the falsetto are now, and nothing will satisfy the scholar but descant.

What occasioned this treatise was the madrigal, which was held in such estimation that it was a reproach, as we have seen before, not to know how to take a part in it. Cards, and games of chance, were at that time totally unknown; and, without reproach to the present day, music was certainly a very inoffensive substitute at least. Thus innu-

merable collections of these madrigals were given to the world by their respective authors, and this emulation, in the very way that was likely to make music generally known and admired, fixed its reputation.

MORLEY is very properly severe on all those innovators who, conscious of their own ignorance, endeavour to prevent the true and natural operation of music. "Thus they go on," says he, giving true definitions and false examples; the example still "importing the contrary to that which was said in the definition. But this is the world; every one will take upon him to write and teach others, none having more need of teaching than himself." He finishes his treatise with an account of thirty-nine different composers, who had flourished before and at the time of the reformation.

After these which I have mentioned, followed other musicians of eminence. BATHE wrote a treatise in which he did good towards the measurement of music. WEEKES and MUNDY composed madrigals which are yet known. FARNABY was a composer of some credit, and MILTON, the father of our celebrated epic poet, was from nature a musician. There are many things extant of his composition; among the rest the celebrated psalm tune

called "The York," the melody of which is so well known that "half the nurses in the kingdom," says an author, "have constantly used it as a lullaby," "and the chimes of many country churches have played it from time immemorial."

BATESON, WYLBIE, BENNET, FARMER, and about thirteen others, also composed and published madrigals, at the head of which set ought to be placed ORLANDO GIBBONS, and MICHAEL ESTE, whose particular merits may be resorted to by a perusal of several collections of madrigals, and in particular "The Triumphs of Oriana," which was published in 1601.

CHAP. XI.

SCOTCH AND IRISH MUSIC.

HAVING so far digressed to speak of English music, I shall, I hope, be pardoned if I take this opportunity of saying something on the subject of Scotch and Irish music, in which I shall take up, as briefly as possible, some of these arguments which have been held out with a view to ascertain their origin, and add the best conjectures I have been able myself to form on the subject.

The common opinion as to the music of SCOTLAND is that it was brought over from ITALY by RIZZIO. This cannot be altogether true, and yet I can see nothing to convince me that it is altogether false. Those who write in favour of this argument say that RIZZIO, being retained in the service of the unfortunate MARY as a musician, and finding the music of the country capable of improvement he set himself down to give it polish and re-

finement, keeping still in view, as far as he could, without trenching on the rules of art, that immethodical and crude melody which he found in the country.

Against this it has been urged that the authority for the above assertion rests merely on tradition, and that there is much written proof to refute it; that Sir JAMES MELVIL, who knew RIZZIO personally, says he was nothing more than a merry fellow and a good musician; that he was drawn in sometimes to sing with the valets of the queen, and on that account, when her French secretary retired to FRANCE, RIZZIO was appointed secretary in his place.

MELVIL is obliged to allow however that RIZZIO engrossed the favour of the queen, that he was suspected of being a pensioner to the Pope, and that by the part he took in all public transactions he gave rise to the troubles of SCOTLAND, and precipitated the ruin of his mistress.

BUCHANAN confirms all this, and indeed goes more at large into the subject; and, from these premises it is inferred that the ambitious and intriguing spirit of RIZZIO left him neither inclination nor opportunity for study, and, therefore, that it was very unlikely

he should attempt a reformation or improvement of the Scotch music, especially as he had only two years to perform the task in.

To answer these arguments, as far as they have gone, it must be confessed there is nothing yet advanced to shew that RIZZIO did not improve the music of SCOTLAND. If MELVIL, who speaking of his superficial character, finds him only a merry fellow and a good musician. is obliged to allow that he had this intriguing spirit, that he was a pensioner of the Pope, and that he, in great measure, occasioned the troubles of SCOTLAND, is it very unlikely that his command over the queen arose from the opportunities he had of administering to her pleasures, one of which was music? BUCHANAN says, that he became absorbed in the intrigues of the court, and rose to the highest degree of favour and confidence, in the management of which power he behaved with such arrogance and contempt, as to render himself odious to all about him.

During all this time, however, we do not find that he quitted his favourite lure, which little agreed with favour, confidence, and power. He was still a singer of madrigals and Scotch songs, and he was even at this employment when he was dragged from the queen and assassinated.

But to go further with this examination. It is insisted on that the origin of the Scotch melodies are to be derived from a higher source than RIZZIO without having recourse to the Italians at all. I shall tread this ground a little, though I fancy we shall not find it very firm for the first position in which we shall be obliged to stand will be rather awkward, and what's worse dangerous.

We are told to believe an Italian writer who roundly asserts that some of the finest vocal music this country can boast of owes its merit, in a great measure to its affinity with that of Scotland. He might have added, and *vice versa*, because none but exotic beauties are ever transplanted. This argument is sustained by a relation that JOHN, the archchanter from ROME, settled among the Northumbrians, and the propensity of that people to music, whose sequestered situation, and the little intercourse they must be supposed to have held with the adjacent countries, will account for a style of music perfectly original, and which might, in process of time, extend itself to the neighbouring kingdom.

Thus an Italian archchanter, who never in his life had heard a note of Scotch music, comes midway between ENGLAND and SCOTLAND, delights the sequestered inhabitants with a new kind of music he

had brought with him, Italian of course, and we are defired from this very clear account, given also by an Italian, to believe that not only the music he taught was natively Scotch, but that it spread itself into ENGLAND, and improved the music there.

The real fact is evident and stares us in the face. This archchanter to whom both nations are very much obliged, perfect in the principles of ZARLINO and PALESTRINO. improved both the native melodies of the English and the Scotch, which sufficiently required it, and which could not take a brighter polish than from the Italian school.

A higher and more rational authority makes JAMES STUART, the first of his name, and the hundred and second in the list of the kings of SCOTLAND, author and composer of Scotch songs. BUCHANAN says that he was skilled in music more than was necessary or fitting for a king, for there was no instrument on which he could not play so well as to contend with the greatest masters of the art in those days.

That JAMES was a poet is universally agreed; and, among many other authorities, ALESSANDRO TASSONI has this passage in a work of his upon various subjects. "We may reckon among the

“ modern musicians JAMES, king of SCOTLAND,
“ who not only composed sacred poems set to music,
“ but also of himself invented a new melancholy
“ and plaintive kind of music different from all
“ other; in which he has been imitated by CARLO
“ GESUALDO, prince of VENOSA, who in these
“ our times has improved music with new and ad-
“ mirable compositions.”

Now here is fairly a reciprocal intercourse between the Scotch and the Italian music, even back to the middle of the fifteenth century, when this polished king could not be unknown to the family of MEDICIS, or they to him. What does all this say, but that music, as well as every other study, is originally vernacular every where but, like intelligence of every kind, it acquires perfection by intercourse.

JAMES did not invent Scotch music, nor did the archchanter, nor did RIZZIO, that is to say, the music which we at this moment call Scotch. The original music in SCOTLAND has been simply but practically defined by every master who has, by way of a trick, taught his scholar to hop over the sharps and the flats of a harpsichord. The accidental wildness with which this experiment impresses you I have no doubt gives a tolerably correct idea of the state of the Scotch music as it was found by JAMES;

who, having natural taste, and an intercourse with courts, refined it in some degree. After him comes JOHN, the archchanter, who rubs off a few more of the hardneses, and, at length, RIZZIO, who was an Italian musician, and the son of an Italian musician, and he adds a new foreign polish in compliment to a queen who loved every thing that was foreign, and who was at that moment intriguing with foreign courts.

Thus I come to my first position, that the assertion of RIZZIO's have brought what is called Scotch music from Italy is not altogether true, nor altogether false. The tunes which are best acknowledged and most admired are clearly a mixture of Scotch and Italian. Have "Tweed Side," or "Last of Patie's Mill," any thing in them of skipping from sharps to flats? Nothing at all. They are simple, beautiful, flowing melodies that, though grounded on the Scotch character, are treated in the Italian style, which has benefited music all over the world, and will be ever the regulation for elegance in the hands of composers, but of those alone, who know to make use of Italian principles and not destroy the native character of music in their own country.

As to the Irish music, there is no doubt but its

native wildness has been in the same manner corrected by the introduction of Italian improvement, which it seems to receive in even a more congenial manner than the Scotch. "Largo Lee," and "The Dargle," are, as melodies, perhaps, equal to any thing in the world, but no one will assert that any thing so beautifully perfect, so satisfactory to the mind, can possibly be natively Irish, crude and indigested; yet the Irish character is so evident that without it all the true beauty of the air would be lost.

It would be extremely easy to shew, by instancing a number of airs, how the English and Scotch style have been mixed together, the Scotch and Irish, the Irish and the English, and sometimes all three, and with the same facility might it be made evident that the Italian style has pervaded them all, but the attempt has hardly ever been undertaken by any man of real genius.

Thus having, by way of illustrating my primary subject, a trespass for which I hope I shall be pardoned, shewn the state of the arts in ENGLAND at the death of ELIZABETH; when science, commerce, and legislation, were at their highest pitch of grandeur, when divinity borrowed lustre from toleration, when law underwent regulation, when

history adopted perspicuity, when poetry was the result of genius, when philosophy acquired sublimity, when painting fled to ENGLAND as to an asylum, and music humbly tendered its mite to make up this weight of perfection; in short, when such men as BACON, SHAKESPEAR, SPENCER, COKE, and RALEIGH, dignified their country; I shall next proceed to shew how far this accumulation of extraordinary talents served for an example to dramatic writers in the succeeding reign.

VOL. III.

C C

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

BOOK VI.

FROM THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH TO THE DEATH
OF JAMES.

CHAP. I.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

HAVING seen how completely SHAKESPEAR soared above all competition while he had only JONSON, CHAPMAN, MARLOE, MARSTON, and the rest to encounter in the reign of ELIZABETH, let us see how well he kept his ground, when in addition to these, he had to cope with BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, MASSINGER, and other authors, who were candidates for dramatic fame during thirteen years of the reign of JAMES the first, at the end of which time the world had the misfortune to lose our incomparable bard; a calamity which would have been irreparable had not posterity lain its proud claim to his wonderful productions.

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, with many fair pretensions to theatrical reputation, never could

fix a foundation solid enough to establish that sort of fame which commands legitimate suffrage upon the spot, and challenges the award of posterity. They were rather amateurs than writers, rather gentlemen than professors; yet has the stage many obligations to them which shall be faithfully enumerated.

BEAUMONT, who was well born and educated, was certainly a man of great talents and sound judgment; which, however, would have been more manifest in his works had not his career been all speed without rest. He died in 1615, a year before the world lost SHAKESPEAR, at which time he had not attained his thirtieth year, and yet between 1607 and that time, a space of only eight years, he was concerned, as we are told, with FLETCHER in fifty-three plays.

FLETCHER was also well born and educated. He was ten years older than BEAUMONT, and lived ten years longer, but he does not seem to have written any thing material either before or after his literary connection with that gentleman; for, in all we know of the works of these partners in fame, only a single piece was written by each, that by BEAUMONT was called *The Masque of Grays Inn*, and that by FLETCHER, *The Faithfull Shepherdess*.

The share each took in their joint labours has been pretty well ascertained. BEAUMONT, who though the youngest man had the soundest judgment, formed and digested the plots, wrote the more interesting and serious parts, and pruned the luxuriances, of which there seems to have been sufficient need, for even at this moment when a revival of one of their plays is attempted it is obliged to be cut, even to mutilation*.

Taken as dramatic productions, the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER can only be considered as having a partial claim to reputation. They have strong particular merit, but, taking them altogether, there is scarcely a play but is extravagant, wild, and ill managed. Most of the plots are Spanish, and seems as if they thought that when they had lopped off part of the luxuriance of *Lopez de Vega*, they had done enough, whereas they should not have left

* There is a well known anecdote which proves that FLETCHER had sometimes a hand in forming their plots as well as BEAUMONT. Having concerted the plan of a tragedy over a bottle, they settled which part of the play they should respectively take; which, being perfectly adjusted, "Well," said FLETCHER, "it shall be so, you manage the rest and I'll undertake to kill the king." These words being overheard by the waiter, they were presently surrounded and made prisoners; but, their characters being well known, and their having it in their power easily to prove that they only meditated the assassination of a theatrical monarch, the whole went off as a jest.

a twig, but have let the new shoots have gained their strength by springing at once from the stock.

This, however, was not the case. FLETCHER not only added to the extravagance of the Spaniard wild and excentric wit of his own, but perpetually tinctured it with obscenity, and the operation has been, that, whenever the manners at any period since that time have been loose and profligate, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER have been the reigning favourites, witness the estimation in which they were held in the reign of CHARLES the second, when, an indelible disgrace to that monarch and his court, they obtained even to the exclusion of SHAKESPEAR. But let us take a cursory review of their works.

The Woman Hater, a comedy which appeared in 1607, is a play of some merit, it is strange that two writers should start with a piece the principal character in which, [if it is not, ought to be out of nature. BEAUMONT is supposed to have been almost wholly the author of this production. It was pretty successful, both when it came out and afterwards when it was revived by sir WILLIAM DAVENANT.

The Knight of the burning Pestle, a strange play which has some beauties and a thousand defects,

was produced in 1611. Its grand fault is, that, like JONSON'S *Every Man out of his Humour*, it was conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex. This play was revived after the restoration with a new prologue spoken by NEL GWYN, at which time licentiousness was a strong recommendation to public favour, but it had never any material success.

Cupid's Revenge, a tragedy, performed by the Children of the Revels, contained some very good poetry, but the plot and machinery were so absurd and ridiculous that it had but very indifferent success.

The Scornful Lady, a comedy brought out in 1616, is a production of some merit, and has more regularity than is generally found in the plays of these authors. There is something, however, very inartificial in the management of the plot, and particularly the conversion of MORECRAFT the usurer, which is certainly forced and unnatural.

King and no King, a tragedy, performed in 1619, has been variously criticised. RYMER has handled it very severely, for which, taking it altogether as a play, he had but too much reason. DRYDEN has been, however, less harsh; and, indeed the general

objections against the plays of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, being the extraneous matter and humour introduced into their plots, and the licentiousness of their wit, which DRYDEN, was obliged a good deal to conform to, might occasion him to be as merciful as possible, and to separate the moralist from the critic, lest in castigating them he should whip himself; while RYMER, who was bound by no such consideration, reprobated what was unworthy without hesitation.

The Maid's Tragedy, produced in 1622. Its success both then and since has been reputable. It has, however, so much of that extravagance and irregularity for which these authors are remarkable, that it has been a stranger to the stage for many years.

Thierry and Theodoret, performed in 1621. This is one of these heterogeneous compositions of which there are too many in the works of these authors. It has ten blemishes for one beauty, and upon the whole is poorly constructed, and but indifferently written.

Philaster. This tragedy came out in 1622, and added considerably to the reputation of these authors. Indeed it has always been justly esteemed

a work of considerable merit, and by many has been thought the best in all the catalogue of their works. On this account it has been revived, with alterations by the bye, at various periods. DRYDEN wrote a prologue when it was performed wholly by women at Lincoln Inn Fields, and SETTLE re-wrote the two last acts and brought it out in 1695. But the best opportunity *Philaster* had for fame and success was when COLMAN altered it to bring forward POWELL and Mrs. YATES, the particulars of which we shall hereafter go into. With all these advantages, however, *Philaster*, from its own merit, has never been able to keep the stage for reasons of a piece with all the rest, because it is full of beauties and defects, because there is not one regular simple grand interest excited, and because it is ingeniously made up of pieces instead of being one general whole.

The two Noble Kinsmen. This play is said to have been written by SHAKESPEAR and FLETCHER, a circumstance which the editor of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER seems to be greatly concerned about, probably out of tenderness for the reputation of FLETCHER, but he need not have made himself in the smallest degree uneasy, for the play itself sufficiently proves that SHAKESPEAR had no hand in it.

Indeed there is not much reputation to be claimed by any body, for the story is CHAUCER'S *Knights Tale*, which we have seen already treated by EDWARDS to the great delight of queen ELIZABETH. There is something, however, gaudy and fine in it; and, like most of the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, it resembles a parterre appearing so full of colours that form, and symetry are not once thought of. This play is said to have been originally produced in 1634, an incongruity that is not very easily reconcileable, because BEAUMONT died in 1615, and FLETCHER in 1625, and yet it is as difficult to believe that the plays produced by these associates were performed during the life time of BEAUMONT, or even of FLETCHER, being fifty-three in number, and the term for the performance of them being only eight years in the first instance, and but eighteen in the last. I shall set down the dates, however, according to the best authorities, and these I take to be when they were first published, not when they were first performed.

The Elder Brother, the date 1637. This play, which is originally Spanish, is strangely and wildly treated by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, and indeed would have sunk long ago into oblivion had not CIBBER taken it for one of the plots of his *Love*

makes a Man, a play we shall hereafter examine. The ground work is good, but the whole merit is due to the original writer.

Monsieur Thomas, the date 1639. Here we have some clue to set us right as to the time the pieces of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER were performed, but we cannot much rely on any thing we learn of these authors, for first we are told that they wrote conjointly all the plays published in their works, except *The Masque of Grays Inn*, and *The Faithful Shepherdess*; we are afterward told that they were assisted by SHAKESPEAR, by JONSON, by MIDDLETON, and other writers, and even this play FLETCHER is said to have written after the death of BEAUMONT. There is nothing, however, in the present instance worth contending for. It is a very indifferent play, and, though published with great care by BROOME after FLETCHER's death, who dedicated it to COTTON, a great admirer of the author, and afterwards altered and got up by DURFEE, under the title of *Trick for Trick*, it never had success. My drift is that, as this piece was originally brought out after the death of FLETCHER, so very probably many of the other productions were also, and this would a good deal invalidate the assertion that BEAUMONT was concerned in so many

of those plays, writing as they did very often for the moment, and being both of them the sort of character not very likely to lay in a store of materials. This conjecture, however, we shall have opportunity more closely to examine as we go on.

Wit without Money, the date 1639. This comedy, being written with less extravagance and closer to nature than the pieces of these authors in general, it has longer kept the stage. There is, however, a flimziness in it that has always prevented it from being attractive. The comic muse that presided over the labours of these writers seems to have been one of those ladies who are for ever either sad, or in hysterics. She seems to be unacquainted with a smile, the result of feeling, and the recommendation of the heart, she is either muzzed with a vapid simper, or convulsed with a broad grin, and under this influence, when these gentlemen have attempted at mere nature, they have not been able to preserve the milk in its native state; their asperity having turned it, by which means their humour is either hard like the curd, or mawkish like the whey. This play is a proof of it, which is well conceived and full of nature, but the circumstances are not wrought high enough, nor do the characters sufficiently come out of the canvass.

Rollo Duke of Normandy, the date 1640. This tragedy is said to have been received with very great applause when it first appeared. It has, however, been long consigned to oblivion, and indeed justly, for it is a turgid imitation of SENECA and JONSON, without fancy or spirit, or, indeed, any thing but heavy, declamatory dialogue, unsustained by force or interest.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, the date 1640. This play is well known, being one of the very few of those written by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER which are now upon the theatrical stock list; intrinsically, however, this piece is no great acquisition to the theatre, and it is at the risk of a thin house that it is ever performed, unless bolstered up with a new LEON, or an ESTIFANIA. The plot of this play though admirably imagined is poorly treated. There is something very well, if it went no further, in reclaiming a vain coquette by placing her in the hands of a brave and manly husband, but MARGUERETTA is an avowed wanton, whom it would have been a disgrace to a man of such a description to have married, and after all LEON's claim to these noble qualities is very ill grounded, for he is the brother of his wife's waiting maid, and he tricks MARGUERETTE into the marriage by personating

an idiot, an art which a man of his spirit and honour would have disdained. This has evidently thrown the authors into an unpleasant predicament towards the end of the play; for, finding it impossible to excuse themselves naturally, they try to hush up both the infamy of their heroine, and their own want of judgment in a summary way. Thus after MARGUETTA has played a hundred indecent tricks, and endeavoured to make her husband's house a brothel, with all the forgiving good nature in the world, he takes her up and "wears her next his heart."

The scenes of the COPPER CAPTAIN and ESTIFANIA, have a better claim to praise. They are highly comic, and the equivoque of the house which mixes the episode with the main design, is the happiest thing in the piece. It is impossible to pass over this article without uniting some degree, of pity with contempt at the fond idea of these authors, who in CACCAFOGO imagined they had outdone FALSTAFF.

The Mad Lover. This play as well as *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, and all the rest that will now follow, were collected into an edition and published in 1647, so that it will be impossible to know

when they actually made their first appearance, nor is it material.

The Mad Lover, which play fir ASTON COCKAIN has highly commended in a copy of verses, is nevertheless a work of but mediocre merit, We know but little of its success, and, indeed, it does not appear to have been at any time very familiar with the stage. It is partly borrowed from *Mundus and Paulina* in *Josephus*.

The Spanish Curate. This play is a heterogeneous jumble in the same style of many others in this collection. It has been pruned, altered, and amended, and fitted to the stage frequently by different authors, but never with any thing like success, and yet there are good materials in it. It is taken from the *Don John*, and the *Spanish Curate*, of GERARDO.

The Little French Lawyer. This comedy is a mixture of the *Spanish Rogue*, and *Don Lewis de Castro*, and *Don Roderigo de Montalva*, which SCARRON has also treated in his *Fruitless Precaution*, and the *Complaisant Companion*, but this could not have been early enough to have been of any use, as some imagine, to BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, BEAUMONT having died when SCARRON was only five years old.

The Custom of the Country. This tragic-comedy, as it is called, has assisted other authors but never did any thing for its own. CIBBER used part of it for *Love makes a Man*, and CHARLES JOHNSON formed out of it his *Country Lasses*. It is a strange wild thing but full of good materials. Its great fault is obscenity. DRYDEN says in one of his prefaces, by way of answer to those who accused him of indecency. "There is more baudry in one play
" of FLETCHER, called the *Custom of the Country*,
" than in all ours together; yet this has often been
" acted on the stage in my remembrance."

CHAP. II.

CONTINUATION OF BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

The Noble Gentleman. This comedy was little known till it was revived by DURFEY, under the title of *The Three Dukes of Dunstable*, and then it was only stirred up to make its stench more intolerable. Sir GEORGE ETHERIDGE, in a letter to the duke of BUCKINGHAM. says, “By my last packet from ENGLAND, among a heap of nauseous trash, I received the Three Dukes of Dunstable, which is really so monstrous and insipid that I am sorry LAPLAND, or LIVONIA, had not the honour of producing it; but, if I did penance in reading it, I rejoice to hear that it was solemnly interred to the tune of Cat Calls.”

The Captain, a comedy of very slender merit, has been sometimes attempted on the stage, but the effort was always so unsuccessful that it has long been lain by as unfit for service.

Beggar's Bush. What success this play had originally is not known. It was altered and brought out under the title of the *Royal Merchant*, by NORRIS, the comedian, in 1706, and in that state occasionally performed. In 1768 it was made into an opera by Mr. HULL, the music by Mr. LINLEY. It had no great success, but the words and music of some of the songs were again brought forward and introduced into the *Camp*, an entertainment performed with great success in 1778, and attributed to Mr. SHERIDAN; but, that every bird of Parnassus may be allowed his own plumage, the songs above mentioned, which were considered as indifferently written at Covent Garden in the *Royal Merchant*, were found admirable afterwards at Drury Lane in the *Camp*, are not the production of Mr. SHERIDAN, but of Mr. HULL.

The Coxcomb. This comedy may rank with *The Captain*. Its revival has been attempted but to no purpose.

The False One. This tragedy is founded on CLEOPATRA'S inconstancy to JULIUS CÆSAR in EGYPT, and taken from SÆTONIUS, PLUTARCH, and other authors, who wrote of those times. It has some strong writing, but upon the whole it is a bad play.

The Chances. This is a comedy borrowed from *The Lady Cornelia* of Cervantes, and has been by various authors altered and brought on the theatre. The duke of BUCKINGHAM's alteration was a very judicious one. He kept the hurry and perplexity of the plot much more clear than it had been originally, but after all it has much more to beget curiosity than to create interest, and the indelicacy that pervades the piece, and the libertinism throughout the whole character of DON JOHN, render it a most improper and reprehensible subject for the stage; nor could GARKICK's incomparable performance of this character, though he had again weeded it, scarcely justify our attention to it.

The Loyal Subject. This tragedy is a poor production. It would not be worth while to examine it, and indeed it has lain so long asleep that it were pity to awake it. *The Laws of Candy*, a tragi-comedy by these authors, has been a great while in the same situation, and so let it remain. *The Lover's Progress* has no better pretension to our notice. It is taken from a French romance called *Lyfander and Calista*, written by DAUDIGUIER, and to the same peaceful oblivion we may also consign the *Island Princess*.

The Humorous Lieutenant. This play has been

performed at different times with some success. The principal part of the plot is taken from PLUTARCH'S Life of DEMETRIUS, and the Lieutenant's refusing to fight after he has been cured of his wounds, is the story of LUCULLUS's foldier, related by HORACE. This is a play of that flighty kind which these authors so frequently produced, and is neither full enough of interest or regularity to claim a permanent situation in the theatre.

Nice Valour ; or the Passionate Madman. This comedy is one of the worst pieces in the whole catalogue.

The Maid in the Mill. This play has been sometimes revived, but its success has never repaid the pains of those who have brought it forward. The plot of ANTONIO ISMENIA, and AMINTA, is borrowed from GIRARDO, and OTRANTE seizing FLORIMEL, the supposed daughter of the miller, is taken from an Italian novel written by BANDELLO, which was afterwards translated into French. There is much good writing in this piece; but there is something so radically wrong in its construction that instead of mending it, the author, as the chairman said to POPE, "had better had made two new ones."

The Prophetess. This tragical history, as it is called, is founded on the well known story of **DIOCLESIAN**, to whom it was foretold by a prophetess that he should be emperor of **ROME** when he should have killed a mighty boar; which prediction was fulfilled by his putting to death the tyrant **APER**. This extraordinary production has been brought on the stage in a variety of shapes, and in particular in the form of an opera by **BETTERTON**, in 1690, embellished by **PURCELL**'s music; but it has always been found so undramatic, and so little interesting, that upon these occasions all the expence has been thrown away.

Bonduca. This queen of **ICENE**, who was indifferently called by historians **BONDUCA**, or **BOADICEA**, has been frequently the subject of a play. This of **BEAUMONT** and **PLETCHER** is the earliest and upon the whole the best; for it is full of pithy, nervous writing and good interest, the misfortunes of that ill fated princess being remarkably touching and well calculated for the stage. It, however, has never done any thing material, even when it has been judiciously altered. **Mr. COLMAN**, with great judgement and a proper tenderness for the reputation of these authors, brought it out on his theatre in the Haymarket, in 1778; but it has been seldom re-

fumed, and it is now lain by with but little prospect of being brought forward again.

The Sea Voyage. The design of this comedy is borrowed from SHAKESPEAR'S *Tempest*, and has in it some good things, not good enough, however, to cope with the original; and, as if the failure was not disgraceful enough to the authors, DUFFEY revived it with alterations which made it ten times worse.

The Double Marriage is a very indifferent play. It has been frequently revived, but, though DUFFEY lent a hand to spoil it, nothing resulted from the attempt but disappointment.

The Pilgrim. This excentric comedy has a great deal of merit. It originally received great applause, and has been often successfully revived. In 1700, sir JOHN VANBRUGH brought it out at Drury Lane Theatre, with a Prologue and DRYDEN'S Secular Masque, which was the last of that great poet's works; but which, for what it is, abounds with brilliant poetry. It was revived again at Drury Lane without success; but about the year 1762, it was brought out at Covent Garden with considerable reputation. Since that time it has been very seldom repeated.

The Woman's Prize; or, the Tamer tamed. This play, which is said to have been written by FLETCHER alone, after the death of BEAUMONT, so that the reader will see how weak all the authorities are upon this subject, is intended as a sequel to SHAKESPEAR'S *Taming of the Shrew*. CATHERINE being dead, PETRUCHIO is married to a young woman of a mild and gentle disposition, who, in conjunction with some female companions, determine to break the temper of her husband, which is at length effected; in consequence of which he blindly submits himself to her will and she rules him as she thinks proper.

Nothing is so easy as to see that a play cannot be framed upon worse principles. The conduct of PETRUCHIO though violent is laudable, because reasonable submission is not only the duty but ensures the comfort of a wife, and, therefore, a proper subject for a poet to treat. Blind submission in a husband, which must render him ridiculous to his friends, and an object of contempt even to his wife, is upon the same principle very improper matter for the stage; besides the author of this play has wholly mistaken the character of PETRUCHIO. So far from being of a tyrannical temper, he is generous and noble; his violence is all put on, all assumed;

and, from the moment he has carried his point and restored CATHERINE to herself, to him, and to her family, he “doffs the lordly husband.” Time, however, who, as SHAKESPEAR says, “tries all old offenders,” has settled the dispute, for, while the Tamer tamed lies quietly interred with many of the family, CATHERINE and PETRUCHIO lives to afford us instruction and amusement.

An Honest Man's Fortune, part of which is taken from HEYWOOD's history of Women, Love's Cure, and The Knight of Malta, are pieces which help to fill up the catalogue of these authors, but, though there is some good writing in each of them, they have very little claim to dramatic merit. To these may be added the *Queen of Corinth* which stands in the same predicament.

Women Pleased. The subject of this play has employed the pens of many authors, three of the different novels of BOCCACE having something to do with it; but the ground work is in CHAUCER's Wife of Bath's Tale, which VOLTAIRE has successfully treated under the title of *Ce qui plait aux Dames*. This was afterwards brought on the French stage by FAVART, and called *La Fee Urgelle*, and at length taken by GARRICK for the subject of

subject of his *Christmas Tale*. This is certainly a piece of merit; but as the subject has been frequently tried and never to any effect without the auxiliary assistance of scenery and music, and, indeed, romantic and fanciful tales are not at all calculated for comedy which should depict true, fair, and natural manners, *Women Pleased*, in the state it came out of the hands of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, has never been fortunate enough to please an audience.

A Wife for a Month. This tragi-comedy, a description which always implies something heterogeneous, has some good traits. It is partly borrowed from the history of SANCHE the eighth, of LEON. The misfortune of this sort of production is that the two plots are so distinct they cannot lend one another interest; and, take them singly, they have not strength enough to support themselves, therefore let them be written ever so well they cannot have the effect of a play upon a subject in which if any thing is introduced it is kept subordinate, and so constructed as to assist the general design. Unfortunately this does not happen to be the merit of this play, nor, indeed, scarcely any tragi-comedy written by these authors.

The Fair Maid of the Inn is a tragi-comedy, and stands in something like the same predicament as *A Wife for a Month*.

Wit at several Weapons, in which there is some whim, did very little itself, but has served as materials for other plays, particularly for sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, who borrowed a good deal of it for his play called *The Wits*.

Valentinian. This is a tragedy, a species of performance in which BEAUMONT and FLETCHER have been least successful; this tragedy, however, is said to have been well received when it first came out. It has been revived, and, in particular, by lord ROCHESTER, but it never met with sufficient applause to warrant a repetition of it.

Love's Pilgrimage. This comedy, partly borrowed from *The two Damsels of Cervantes*, and partly from *The New Inn*, a play of JONSON, which was damned, has some merit. With all this assistance, however, though it has often been brought forward, the revivers only awaked it that it might sleep the faster.

Four Plays in One. These four pieces, the two

first of which may be called tragi-comedies, the third a tragedy, and the fourth an opera, are principally taken from BOCCACE, and are supposed to be performed before MANUEL, king of PORTUGAL, and his queen ISABELLA, at the celebration of their nuptials, the court being introduced as spectators, and the king and queen making remarks on the representation. It is, however, most probable that this curious medley was never performed at all.

The Wild Goose Chase. This play has considerable merit, but it is like the rest ill conducted. The materials, however, have been found very useful; FARQUHAR has borrowed almost four acts of *The Inconstant* from it.

These plays, *The Widow*, *The Jeweller of Amsterdam*, *The Faithful Friend*, *A Right Woman*, and *The History of Mader, King of Britain* are all said to have been written by these wits, either singly, together, or in conjunction with others, but how they were actually employed on them remains a secret which will be, probably, never divulged, nor is it very material whether it be or not.

I shall yet employ, however, a few words upon the subject of these authors, whose labours, though they may have failed as to regularity, and have

been weak on the side of judgment, are, notwithstanding, meritorious, and breathe in various instances spirit and genius. The mistake seems to have been an endeavour to soar beyond what nature qualified them for. The genius of SHAKESPEAR, being extensive enough to grasp at real and imaginary worlds, they vainly conceived they might endeavour at the same track; but, in their fondness, they were Ixions, and in their presumption Phaetons.

BEAUMONT is said to have possessed the correctest judgment of the two, and FLETCHER the strongest genius, and we are even told, that JONSON used to submit his works to the opinion and correction of BEAUMONT; this, however, after what we have witnessed of CHAPMAN, DECKER, and others whom this hard cynic envied and abused, it is extremely difficult to believe; for, if BEAUMONT had such consummate judgment he certainly would have used it in the construction of his own plays, the plots of which are the crudest and most indigested that can be possibly be conceived; and, as to the judgment of JONSON, it is but justice to say that it was his greatest merit, and that there is more good sense in the construction of *Every Man in his Humour* than in that of all the works of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER put together.

All that is necessary to say on the subject may be comprized in this. The industry with which BEAUMONT and FLETCHER explored the works of the Spaniards and others for dramatic materials has been of such benefit to the English stage, that it not only lent material assistance towards bringing it into great forwardness, but served as a ground work for others, who have since derived much of their success from having had recourse to their labours.

As to their particular merits they were both good writers, and would have been better had they not perpetually tried to go beyond the bounds that nature and genius prescribed them, had they not written too hastily, had they not given into an unbridled wit which grew to licentiousness and destroyed the legitimate drift of their productions, had they not, in short, arrogated a false consequence and ridiculously fancied themselves superior to a man, whom they might have been proud to have followed at an humble distance.

As to the share they had respectively in those productions which are published with their joint names, I have already shewn that whatever has been conjectured on the subject seems to have a very falacious air. That BEAUMONT could have been concerned in fifty-three plays in eight years appears

to be impossible. It is as certainly impossible that so large a number could have been brought out during that time, and it is very unlikely that BEAUMONT left behind him, he who was a writer for the moment, materials for the greatest part of these plays; but, as we have no proof that what has been asserted on this subject is false, though it is a little contradictory, we are compelled so far to acquiesce as to give our verdict according to the evidence.

One proud fact, however, the labours of these writers and their cotemporaries have ascertained. All this contention for pre-eminence that was manifested, all these valuable dramatic materials that were produced, and all this rapid improvement to which the stage had arisen, had been confirmed before the French theatre, that has always arrogantly affected to lead ours, boasted a single line from the great CORNEILLE, or any one of his satellites and before MOLIERE and RACINE were born. Who then can deny that, having so perfect a model before them as the English stage, they made it an object of their imitation? But that there may be no cavil this shall hereafter be incontestibly proved.

CHAP. III.

MASSINGER.

IF, in BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, we lament that authors sometimes attempt too much, in MASSINGER, we have a proof that they may do too little. This very charming writer has seldom been allowed the merit he possessed, perhaps, because he was a stranger to presumption, vanity, and those other qualities which often procure for an author more fame than he deserves; posterity, however, generally sets the matter right; which, in the opinions of all judges of genius and taste, has placed MASSINGER very little behind JONSON, and far before BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

MASSINGER, by the patronage of the earl of MONTGOMERY, under whom his father had an honourable employ, and afterwards the earl of PEMBROKE, was encouraged in his youth to pursue polite literature; which, coming in consonance with a beautiful and refined genius which he inherited from

nature, he soon possessed all the qualities for a writer of correct taste and brilliant fancy.

The stage attracted his attention, and was, indeed, the very field for the exercise of his abilities. He had invention and ingenuity, he knew nature and character; his style, while it was warm and fervid, was, nevertheless, pure and decorous, and even went beyond the times in which he wrote for polish and refinement; for he was as strong as JONSON without being dull, and as elegant as WALLER without being mawkish; but, to give the proudest proof of the genius of MASSINGER, you see a great deal of the mind of SHAKESPEAR in him, though he has never servilely imitated him, nor arrogantly attempted to soar after him to those heights which his genius alone could reach. But let us examine his plays.

The Virgin Martyr. This play was first acted, as we are told, in 1622, at which time MASSINGER was thirty-eight years old. He was assisted by DECKER in this production, which, perhaps, might better have been let alone, but his modesty too often prevented him from feeling his own consequence. *The Virgin Martyr* is taken from the *Martylogies of the persecution in the time of DIOCLESIAN*; and, though there is some fine writing in it, it is evi-

dently a work of inexperience, and, therefore, had no great success.

The Duke of Milan. Here our author had fairer play for his genius. This tragedy was performed in 1623 with good success. The scene where instructions are given by SFORZA to his favourite FRANCISCO for the murder of MARCELIA, is wrought up very masterly, and I have no doubt but this very play has assisted the various *Mariamnes* of the French stage, from TRISTAN to VOLTAIRE, that story from the History of the Jews having been the foundation of *The Duke of Milan*. Indeed the circumstances are so similar that Mr. CUMBERLAND very laudably was induced to blend this play and FENTON'S *Mariamne* together; but probably from his unwillingness to encroach upon the writing of either of these authors, it appeared not to be of a piece, and, therefore, did not succeed.

The Bondman, acted at the Cock Pit, Drury Lane, 1623. This is a tragedy of great merit. The plot is full of truth and consistency, and the writing is strong and nervous. The incident of bringing back the rebellious slaves to their duty with whips, is in the truest spirit of the drama, and is here used to great advantage. *The Bondman* has been fre-

quently revived, and particularly by Mr. CUMBERLAND in 1779, at Covent Garden theatre. This was certainly a very judicious alteration, and it was highly spoken of by the critics, but it did not succeed to the degree that was reasonably expected.

The Roman Actor was performed at Black Friars in 1629. It was MASSINGER's greatest favourite among all his works, and the writers of that time were so far of the same opinion that no less than six copies of commendatory verses were prefixed to it. Indeed its success was very decided, both originally and when it was revived by BETTERTON, who rendered himself very celebrated in the principal character. There is certainly a dignity in the conduct of the piece, and the language is charming.

The Renegado. This is a tragi-comedy and was performed in 1630, at Drury Lane. This play was recommended by complimentary verses like the former, and certainly has much merit, but it has the fault of all tragi-comedies. The plots hang incongruously together, and, therefore, each deprives the other of the approbation that would else be due to them.

The Picture, performed in 1630, at the Globe, and Black Friars. This admirable production,

which is called a tragi-comedy, ought to be denominated a play, for it consists of a plot and an episode that have immediate relation to each other. There are objections to this piece, one of which cannot be got over, because it is particularly wrong to call in magic to assist what ought to be a representation of nature. BATISTA's reading, therefore, in nature's hidden secrets, and having thereby formed a portrait of SOPHIA which appears to the eyes of MATHIAS beautiful or deformed, according as she is loyal or disloyal, is certainly revolting, and inadmissible; but it has this admirable effect: The poet by placing his characters in so forcible a situation, is obliged to give them a language adequate to it, and thus the passion of jealousy acquires a peculiar kind of turbulence and agitation which, from mere conjectural proofs, could not have belonged to it.

Of this difficult and delicate task, MASSINGER has acquitted himself wonderfully; so that, if you can bring yourself to pardon the deception, it will encrease your admiration of the author. Novelty was, probably, his excuse, and he has so availed himself of it, that, perhaps, there cannot in language be found any thing stronger than the effect it has produced.

It is impossible here to go into the different merits of this piece ; but whether you take it for conduct, for character, or any other requisite, but especially for language, a few spots excepted, it is certainly a constellation in literature.

The Emperor of the East was performed in 1632. This is a tragi-comedy, and taken from the Life of the younger THEODOCIUS. We should have known more at present, perhaps, of this piece in its original form had not LEE, that mad, but beautiful writer, taken some of the most forcible parts of it for his tragedy of *Theodocius*.

The Maid of Honour, performed in 1638, is a work of considerable merit. It has been revived, and particularly within a few years at Drury Lane theatre ; but productions by men of such eminence as MASSINGER should never be touched but by authors of first rate abilities. In its original state *The Maid of Honour* could not now be produced to advantage, but it had better have remained in its original state than have appeared as it did at Drury Lane theatre.

The Fatal Dowry, which was brought out in 1632, is a tragedy, and would probably, have pos-

felless more merit if MASSINGER had not been assisted by FIELD. It has, however, enough to have materially assisted both ROWE and VOLTAIRE; for it has furnished the most material parts of the *Fair Penitent*, and the character of NERESTAN in *Zara*. I shall say the less of this play because I like MASSINGER best when he stands upon his own ground.

A New Way to Pay Old Debts, is a comedy full of admirable materials. It came out in 1633, and was prefaced by two copies of commendatory verses, one by sir HENRY MOODY, and the other by sir THOMAS JAY. This play has been considered by most of the critics as the best in all the works of MASSINGER. It is difficult to say this; but it is certainly drawn with great nature and force, and written with strength and nerve. The overreaching of sir GILES OVERREACH, "both a lion" and a fox in his proceedings," is masterly, and the dismissal of his creature MARRALL, is moral and poetic. There are many other parts of this play full of sterling merit. It has been several times revived, particularly at Drury Lane, and since at Covent Garden, to assist HENDERSON, who performed sir GILES OVERREACH with judgment; but injudicious pruning always wounds a good tree,

and this kind of stab did the reputation of MASSINGER sustain in both this case and in other cases.

The Great Duke of Florence. This piece, like *The Guardian*, is called a comical history. It had great success, and is recommended by verses written by DONNE and FORD. The story of EDGAR and ELFRIDA, is said to have been taken from this play; and certainly the circumstance of SANNASARRO's giving the Count a false account of LYDIA's beauty, has a resemblance to that part of it; but that story was known before MASSINGER, therefore, RYMER, who took his materials from *William of Malmesbury*, RAVENSCROFT who profited of both, and HILL, whose *Athelwold*, and also MASON's *Elfrida*, were taken from history, could not have had the least necessity to resort to the *Duke of Florence* for assistance.

The Unnatural Combat, performed in 1639, is a tragedy of very great merit. This merit, however, lies more in the astonishing manner in which the author has treated this strange subject, than in the conduct of the piece itself. To fancy revolting circumstances, which it is dreadful to admit may be natural, and operate upon them as if they were generally so, is begging the question, and cannot be excused, however forcibly it may speak the merit of that

author who can write well upon such extraordinary occasions.

The mutual accusations of the father and son, which are the cause of the combat, the artful manner in which the Elder MALEFORT imposes upon the Count by acting the BRUTUS, and the delicate, yet determined tone of the Younger, who accuses his father of an incestuous crime which he scarcely dares to hint, is executed with such sound judgment, such shrewd art, and such consummate address, that I cannot think there is any thing in language to rival it; but, though these have been considered, from ÆSCHYLUS to us, as the proper subjects to excite terror, and so they are in one sense, I never will allow they are the legitimate, fair objects of the drama.

At any rate let there be qualification. The incest of HAMLET's father, caused by ambition, is an admissible subject for an author, the incest of MALEFORT's father, without a motive but barely wickedness, is not admissible; and, under these circumstances much as the writing of *The Unnatural Combat* may captivate, I believe no real well wisher to the interest of the drama will wish to see it brought forward on the stage.

The Guardian, performed in 1655, is a comedy of very great merit; and, two or three trifling particulars excepted, I see nothing to prevent its holding a regular rank on the stage. It is full of well managed equivocate, which is judiciously heightened at the end of the third act, and naturally developed at the finish of the play. The writing is of that fluent and easy kind that, nevertheless, has strength and force, and that gives to manliness, and greatness of mind, the unaffected expression of nature; but this is the peculiar beauty of MASSINGER; who, let his subjects be ever so common, never descends.

The Bashful Lover, a tragi-comedy, which was produced at the Private Theatre, at Black Friars, in 1655, deserves mention only on account of many beauties that are scattered up and down in different parts of it; for it is not constructed with the usual correctness of MASSINGER, nor is the drift of the plots so interesting as any of his other pieces.

The Very Woman, is another tragi-comedy. It was performed also in 1655, and has merit; but neither that nor sir ASTON COCKAINE'S *Obstinate Lady*, from which it is borrowed, has a good claim to any material reputation. The more you read MASSINGER the more you admire him, and, there-

fore, even in this play, we trace a true genius and an elegant writer; but it is, nevertheless, unequal to many of his other productions.

The Old Law, a comedy brought out in 1656, is by no means a good play, though parts of it are admirable. MASSINGER was here assisted by MIDDLETON and ROWLEY. Perhaps it would have been better if he had been let alone; certainly neither of these writers was by any means equal to MASSINGER.

The City Madam, produced in 1659. This comedy, which has a most laudable drift, is worked up with great art and address. The folly of the children of industry and sobriety, who spurn at that happiness they legitimately possess, and that stable consequence by which they are the support of the commercial interest of the kingdom, and, therefore, the basis of its wealth, for the transitory and frivolous pleasures of the court, has been properly considered by the dramatist as the best materials for the exercise of his genius.

MASSINGER here has handled this subject in a masterly style. His portraits are faithful to nature,

his manners are correctly appropriate, and his discrimination is nice and critical.

Haughty, puffed up beauty, full of vanity and ambition, is as natural as it is contemptible ; grovelling ideas and riches wrested from the unsuspecting and necessitous, are inseparable, and a distinction between folly and crime, weakness and wickedness, is, in these circumstances, the duty of an author. Thus has MASSINGER made his *City Madam* and her daughters arrogant and overbearing to be severely punished and afterwards pardoned, and thus he has made that fostered snake the dependant brother the instrument of temporary punishment to others whose crimes were within the limits of pardon ; till, at last, his arts recoil upon himself, and he is confounded in that ruin he had meditated for others.

This is the grand outline of the play, and very fine it is ; there are subordinate particulars, however, which might have been better managed, fir JOHN, LACY, and PLENTY might have been more judiciously disguised and have come with a more probable tale, considering the consummate art of the man they had to deal with, and the magic at last, after the disrepute poor STARGAZE had thrown it into, is a poor contrivance to awe a libertine, and an

unbeliever; and, even if it had been in other respects admissible, it is a blameable vehicle for a dramatic plot, but particularly for a comedy. We pass over a ghost in a tragedy, we are even charmed with a spectre in a romance, and we have no objection to changing of the wives in the *Devil to Pay*, because it is a farce, though none of these are critically right, but producing ORPHEUS, CERBERUS, CHARON, and twenty other fantastic spirits in a sober citizen's house would not have imposed upon LUKE, nor ought it to have imposed upon the audience.

The faults, however, in this comedy after all are but trivial, and were they judiciously removed, and the denouement brought about by a more natural means, there are few pieces on the stage that could challenge a fairer claim to reputation.

Besides the play already mentioned, there were others, written by MASSINGER, of which we have different accounts. Of these *The Noble Choice*, *The Judge*, or *Believe as you List*, *The Spanish Viceroy*, *Minerva's Sacrifice*, *The Tyrant*, *Philenzo and Hippolita*, *Antonio and Vallia*, and *Fast and Welcome*, were lost to the world by the carelessness of a servant belonging to Mr. WARBURTON, the SOMERSETSHIRE Herald.

Three others under the titles of *The Wandering Lovers*, *The Italian Night Piece*, and *The Prisoner*, were performed but never printed. These, therefore, that have been here enumerated with a slight account of their different merits, may be considered as the theatre of MASSINGER; and here it is impossible to help noticing that I cannot in my conscience agree to the dates of these plays which I have set down, by the concurrent authorities of various writers, exactly as I found them.

To set up any criterion of my own, founded only on probable circumstances, as to the dates, would be to combat errors, which, to a monstrous number, are considered as dramatic gospel. Common sense will not permit us to credit the date of any play between 1635 and the Restoration; for PRYNN and Puritanism so attacked the stage, that, though it lifted its head for a short time, its own ruin was involved at length in the ruin of the constitution*.

* This PRYNN who was a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, and an enthusiastic puritan, published in 1633, a work which he called *Histrion Masfex, or Player's Scourge*. This was a most absurd, illiberal, and wanton abuse of plays, players and all who favoured them. It was answered judiciously enough by a publication of as many old plays as could be found, the drift of which did not appear to be of that immoral tendency that PRYNN had represented;

It is on this account that, although, in this book I have limited myself to the death of JAMES the first, I have, nevertheless, gone through the whole life of MASSINGER, and I shall do the same by JONSON, because it keeps the whole subject under the reader's eye and within the scope of recollection; besides it is within possibility that in doing this I have committed no error, for in the accounts of MASSINGER's death scarcely two of them are alike;

other circumstances concurred also to render this bigot unpopular. He says in his book that "Princes dancing in their own persons was the cause of their untimely ends. That our English ladies, shorn and frizzled madams, had lost their modesty, that plays were the chief delight of the Devil, and all that frequented them were damned." This was considered as a reflection on the king and queen, who publicly frequented plays. He vents his antipathy to music in terms as unqualified, and, in particular, he calls church music "The bleating of brute beasts," and says, "the choiristers bellow the tenor, as if they were oxen, bark a counterpoint like a kennel of hounds, roar a treble as if they were a bulls, and grunt out a base like a parcel of hogs." The first of these passages reflecting upon the king and nobles, and the other on the church, it was deemed an infamous libel on every branch of the state, and ordered to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman; and, in addition to this, his own sentence was to be put from the bar, to be excluded the Society of Lincoln's Inn, and degraded by the University of OXFORD; to stand in the pillory in Westminster and Cheapside, to lose an ear at each place, and stand with a paper in his hand, declaring his offence to be a libel against both their majesties and the government, to be fined five thousand pounds, and to suffer perpetual imprisonment; the whole of which sentence was put into execution to the letter.

may, some make him live twenty years longer than others do, and some say he died in affluence, while others insist that he died in penury.

But, to leave that which in this author is uncertain, to dwell a little on what is not, in his various merits he still lives, and will long continue to do so, to the honour of genius, of taste, of elegance, of judgment, of truth, of nature, and of morality.

CHAP. IV.

CHAPMAN, HEYWOOD, DECKER, MARSTON, AND
OTHERS.

I SHALL now go into all that it will be necessary to say on the subject of CHAPMAN and other writers, who, though they were considered as a subordinate class, were, nevertheless, men of abilities; and, having done this, and also noticed what more I may conceive myself bound to say of JONSON, I shall pursue the willing task of dwelling a little more on the plays of SHAKESPEAR.

Before JAMES the first, CHAPMAN produced two plays. In 1605 he brought out a comedy called *All Fools*, which was taken from TERENCE, and which received considerable applause. *Eastward Hoe*, performed in the same year, is more celebrated for the predicament into which it plunged its supposed authors, CHAPMAN, JONSON, and MARSTON, as the reader will recollect, than for any merit the piece itself contained. HOGARTH,

however, took from it the plan of his *Idle and Industrious Apprentices*, and it was revived many years since as a proper substitute on Lord Mayor's Day, for that disgrace to the stage, *The London Cuckolds*, TATE again brought it forward and called it *The Cuckold's Haven*, and Mrs. LENOX also brought it out with alterations under the title of *Old City Manners*.

The Gentleman Usher, a comedy produced in 1606, had its partisans, but it is indifferently spoken of, and there is a doubt whether it was ever acted, *Monsieur D'Olive*, performed in the same year, received some praise, and we are told was performed with success.

Buffy D'Ambois made its appearance in 1607. It was the first tragedy produced by CHAPMAN, and thought by some to be the best of his works. It kept the stage for a time with considerable reputation, but at length, that eternal mutilator of good authors, DUFFEY laid his iron hand on it, from which time it became so cramped that it has ever since been laid aside.

Cæsar and Pompey was performed in the same year with some success. *The Conspiracy*, and *Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron, Marshal of France*,

came out in 1608, and consists of two plays which relate to the history of FRANCE in the time of HENRY the fourth.

May Day, a comedy, was brought out at Black Friars in 1613. There is nothing material known of this piece, but *The Widow's Tears*, produced in 1612, is well spoken of. The subject is evidently *The Ephesian Matron*, but in the other parts there are some well wrought scenes, and several affecting and interesting incidents. CHAPMAN is every where a man of learning, but he has in this play shewn himself a writer of taste and genius.

The Revenge of Buffy D'Ambois, is a bad attempt at following up a good subject, for it is not so close to history as the former play, nor does it create so much interest. *The Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn*. This was no more than a temporary piece to celebrate the marriage of the Count PALATINE, of the RHINE, with the Princess ELIZABETH. It was performed before the Royal Family at Whitehall, and cost the societies of these courts two thousand four hundred pounds. The machinery and decorations were designed and conducted by INIGO JONES.

Two Wise Men and all the rest Fools. It is doubtful whether this curious piece was written by CHAPMAN; but, as it has never been ascribed to any other author, we always find it in his catalogue. It was performed, or, perhaps, only printed, in 1619, and is remarkable for having a prologue and epilogue in prose, and for its being extended to seven acts; but as these are innovations of no kind of consequence, the intelligent reader would have been better satisfied if an account had been preserved of its merits as to character, incident, and situation.

Revenge for Honour, The Fatal Love, The Tragedy of a Yorkshire Gentlewoman and her Son, and The Second Maiden's Tragedy, are also from the pen of CHAPMAN, but they do not appear to have been printed, and, therefore, it is impossible to say any thing of their merits with certainty. What we do know of this author, who was, as is universally admitted, a man of sound erudition, in the character of a dramatist is at least honourable to his fame, which cannot, perhaps, receive a stronger proof than his being considered a respectable cotemporary writer with SHAKESPEAR, and an object of envy to JONSON.

HEYWOOD's dramatic works, after the death of

ELIZABETH, next claim our attention. *If you Know not me you Know Nobody*, was performed in 1606. This production consists of two parts, and relates to circumstances which happened during the reign of ELIZABETH, but how the building of the Royal Exchange can be dramatized is really more than one can ordinarily conceive. Upon the whole it was a strange incomprehensible thing, which the author allows, but he shields himself from censure by a declaration that it was printed without his consent, and to prove that this copy, which is full of irregularity, and not even divided into acts, might be modified and amended, he produced what he conceived a perfect piece on the same subject, which, however, met as bad a fate as the original.

The Fair Maid of the Exchange. of which mention is only made of the title, *The Golden Age*, and *The Silver Age*, two pieces crammed full of circumstances from the Heathen Mythology without order, or coherence, as is also his next piece called *The Brazen Age*, and *The Four Apprentices of London*, with the *Conquest of Jerusalem*, which is taken from the exploits of GODFREY of BOLLOGNE, a most romantic subject for a play, are also among HEYWOOD's dramatic productions.

After this we met with *A Woman killed with*

Kindness, a piece, though upon a most extravagant and overstrained subject, certainly written in a strong and masterly style. The incidents are perplexed, owing to their number, but the relation they bear to one another is perfectly dramatic, except the quarrel of MONTFORD and ACTON, which had better have been out of the piece. There is something revolting in the conduct of Mrs. FRANKFORD, but her contrition, and the consciousness of her not deserving that lenity which her forgiving husband, in consequence of her repentance, humanely shews her, and which produces the remorse that is the cause of her death, exhibits a most forcible moral. It seems to reprobate by anticipation the dangerous doctrines of lord CHESTERFIELD, and is, in fact, whether designedly or not, the ground work of Mr. PRATT's admirable production *The Pupil of Pleasure*. These are the worthiest purposes to which the stage can be applied, and if this play were well modernized, and well acted, it could not fail of brilliant success*.

* As I conceive it a duty to lift the English stage, wherever I properly may, into consequence, I shall never omit any material proof that it has been of service to foreigners. I have no doubt but DODSLEY's twelve volumes of Old Plays have created half the reputation of the German theatre. It is a pity, however, that the German authors constantly pervert the morality of these plays; for, upon the footing that their stage is now constructed, their characters

The Rape of Lucrene. This true Roman tragedy as it is called, and indeed very properly, for it is a complete farago of declaiming, miming, and

are any thing but natural and moral; which may be proved in many instances. I shall only, however, adduce one proof, which I do upon fair and liberal ground, conceiving it a positive duty I owe the public to warn them against the introduction of false taste. The proof I mean is the *Stranger*, a play recently performed at Drury Lane, which is evidently taken from *A Woman killed with Kindness*, with this difference, that in the first the husband receives an adulteress to his bed, a thing which an audience ought not to tolerate, and in the other, however the imbecility of nature may plead for the guilty wife, the husband true to his own honour, nay, to her honour, to the honour of his children, for there are children in both plays, solemnly allots her a situation worthy of his wife, where she may repent at leisure, but resolves to have no further intercourse with her, all which she beautifully calls "a mild sentence." There, since nothing but death can obliterate her crime, her remorse and his complicated kindness put an end to her existence; and why has the poet done this? That the wife may be forgiven and pitied, that the husband's honour may be restored, and that the children taught by so solemn an example, may walk in the paths of virtue. This is moral, and poetic; but would any of these ends be attained were the husband, forgetful of himself, and of social and moral duty, to pardon her frailty, to consecrate adultery, and to imprint on the young minds of his children that happiness is to be gained by infamy? These are facts, and I shall make no further comment on them than to say, that such perverted exhibitions are traps for virtue, and that the better they are written the more they will prove seductive.

I cannot resist transcribing a short scene, to shew how exquisitely natural, yet difficult, the conduct of the husband is.

After she has said, fearing her husband's just anger, that she deserves a thousand deaths, but entreats that, for the sake of her sex,

singing, is very ill calculated for the English stage, and, therefore, it was poorly received. This is, however, by no means a general rule, and more's the pity.

to which she was once an ornament, but then a reproach, he would not deform her, nor wound her but let her body go perfect to her grave, he answers :

FRAN. My God, with patience arm me ! rise, nay rise,
And I'll debate with thee. Was it for want
Thou plaid'st the strumpet ? Was't thou not supply'd
With every pleasure, fashion and new toy ;
Nay even beyond my calling ?

ANNE. I was.

FRAN. Was it then disability in me ?

ANNE. O no.

FRAN. Did not I lodge thee in my bosom ?
Wear thee in my heart ?

ANNE. You did.

FRAN. I did indeed, witness my tears I did.
Go bring my infants hither. O Nan, O Nan ;
If neither fear nor shame, regard of honour,
The blemish of my house, nor my dear love
Could have withheld thee from so lewd a fact :
Yet for these infants, these young harmless souls,
On whose white brows thy shame is character'd,
And grows in greatness as they wax in years ;
Look but on them, and melt away in tears.
Away with them ; lest as her spotted body
Hath stain'd their names with stripe of bastardy,
So her adulterous breath may blast their spirits
With her infectious thoughts. Away with them.

Thus we see that, almost two hundred years ago, the English stage was in a state of greater perfection than the German stage is at this moment.

The Fair Maid of the West, a comedy in two parts, had considerable success. Its subject may be found in DANCER, who wrought these two pieces into a novel called *The English Lovers*.

The Iron Age. These fanciful kind of pieces are very ill calculated for the stage but, now and then incongruities please best. *The Iron Age* was produced in two parts, the first of which contains no less than the Rape of HELEN, the Siege of TROY, the Combat between HECTOR and AJAX, the Deaths of TROILUS and HECTOR, the Death of ACHILLES, the Contention of AJAX and ULYSSES, the Death of AJAX, and many other circumstances.

The second part goes on and describes the deaths of AGAMENNON, MENELAUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, HELEN, ORESTES, EGISTHUS, PYLADES, and in short all the rest of the personages, at any time, or in any way concerned in the Trojan war, to THERSITES; so that we have HOMER, and all the other of the classical writers on this curious subject, crammed into two plays, or rather narratives in dialogue; which are brought forward without the least regard to any species of dramatic propriety. This curious medley, however, as well as the *Three Ages* before spoken of brought crowded audiences, which in

general consoles an author for any drawback on reputation.

The English Traveller, a tragi-comedy, is partly taken from PLAUTUS, and partly from an actual fact. It travelled, however, a very little way either towards dramatic fame, or public favour. *A Maidenhead well Lost*, lost itself, for there is no trace to be found of it.

The Lancashire Witches, in which BROME assisted, and which was afterwards altered into a more regular piece by SHADWELL, neither in its original or its altered state, did much. Party spirit conjured up for it, of course, adherents and enemies, and the Papists were horridly provoked against TEAGUE O'DIVELLY, whose tricks and ingenuity, probably, they envied.

Love's Mistress. This is a masque which was performed before the Royal Family several times. It is taken from APULIUS's *Golden Ass*, and is indebted to the decorations of INIGO JONES for the greatest part of its success. This play, the *Challenge for Beauty*, the *Royal King and Loyal Subject*, taken from FLETCHER's *Loyal Subject*, the *Wife Woman of Hogsdon*, which was printed with a copy of com-

mentatory verses before it, and *Fortune by Sea and Land*, in which ROWLEY assisted, are all the dramatic productions we know of, out of the prodigious number which HEYWOOD, like HARDY, is said, and, perhaps with equal truth, to have written.

Of these pieces few will be found regular, taking them by any denomination. *A Woman killed with Kindness*, is beyond measure the best production of this author, and yet there is much good writing, and there are many beauties in some of his other productions; but they were upon such strange, fanciful subjects that they could come into no class; and, as to the immense labour he is said to have bestowed on them, his great merit seems to have been a good memory, for he has so thrown together what he had conned at school, that, instead of being original himself, he was little more than the amanuensis of the ancients.

DECKER, after the death of queen ELIZABETH, produced the following pieces. *The Honest Whore*, performed in 1604. The different opinions concerning this play shew how little we know, with any certainty, of the works of authors at that period. A biographer tells us confidently, that neither this play nor the sequel to it is divided into acts; but

this is so far from the truth that DODSLEY has printed it in his collection of old Plays, where it not only appears in a very regular state, but gives good proof that DECKER had considerable merit. The second part, appears to have been a number of scenes thrown together, but it was never digested into a regular play.

Westward Hoe. This play was brought on in 1607. WEBSTER assisted in the writing of it, as he did of *Northward Hoe*, and we are told they had both success, probably more owing to the titles caught from the *Eastward Hoe*, which we have seen so popular in consequence of having involved its authors in such disgrace.

The *Whore of Babylon*, written expressly in compliment to queen ELIZABETH, with a view to expose the designs of the Jesuits, and set forth their dangerous plots, from which the queen escaped, was printed in 1607, but it is most probable it never was performed. The queen is represented under the character of TITIANA, which name SPENCER originally gave her, and which was adopted by SHAKESPEAR in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. There were other characters of that time personified, all tending to describe and illustrate the virtues of

ELIZABETH, a proper tribute to her exalted merit, and a laudable mode of stimulating the loyalty of the people.

If it be not good the Devil's in it. This play is founded on MACHIAVAL'S Marriage of BELPHEGOR, and is a poor attempt at wit from the title to the last word. The title, indeed, is so contemptible a quibble that as the Devil is actually in the play, so the author gives it under his hand that it is not good; this flimzy stuff has, however, been frequently copied, and once most miserably under the title of a *Comic Opera*, at Drury Lane.

Match me in London. To this play the different writers have given different merits; but, as it is impossible that it should be excellent, poor, tolerable, and good, at the same time, which words I copy, we may fairly take it that it had merit and defects.

These are all the dramatic works the world gives to DECKER. He is said, however, to have written, in conjunction with DAY, *The Jew of Venice*, not printed, *Guy, Earl of Warwick*, of which various writers have conjectured a good deal but have known nothing, *Gustavus, King of Swithland*, of which the world is nearly as ignorant, and the *Tale*

of *Jocondo and Astolpho*, taken probably from the same stock as LA FONTAINE'S *Joconde*, a circumstance not, however, to be ascertained, this play having been destroyed, together with so many others, by WARBURTON'S servant.

Upon the whole, DECKER cannot be ranked with CHAPMAN and HEYWOOD, and it is very probable that he would not have been half so well respected as he was, had not the envy of JONSON, who had he possessed an atom of good sense would have smiled and passed by him, lifted him into a consequence, not only fancied by him but credited by the world.

MARSTON, who wrote in all but eight plays, produced six of them after the death of ELIZABETH. The *Insatiate Countess*, performed in 1604, is one of them, and contains under feigned titles the history of JOAN, the first queen of JERUSALEM, NAPLES, and SICILY, whose story had been pretty well handled before, both for the stage and as a novel. The reader will remember that BERENGER de PARASOLS was poisoned for making free with this lady's character, and this queen is intended by ANNE, duchess of ULME, in GOD'S revenge against adultery. Very little is known as to the real merit of this play.

The *Malcontent*, produced in 1604. This is the play which MARSTON, as we have seen, dedicated with such warmth to JONSON, with whom he had afterwards so severe a quarrel. Some of MARSTON's enemies endeavoured to induce a general belief that this piece was intended as a satire on particular characters, which invidious report JONSON is supposed secretly to have seconded, and the probability is that this gave rise to the dispute which made the breach between these authors. There does not appear, however, the smallest ground for this imputation; for by several writers, but particularly LANGBAIN, we are assured the *Malcontent* was a fair, manly, general satire; besides, we are capable of ascertaining this ourselves, and so far we must vouch in favour of the author, whose piece certainly goes to the times both then and now; but this does not preclude the possibility that particular persons sat for their portraits, for satire was certainly the vein of MARSTON, and it is impossible to be critically satirical without fitting the cap somewhere.

The *Dutch Curtizan*. This comedy is full of the intrigue of those times, and must certainly have had success, for *The Revenge; or, a Match in Newgate*, which is attributed to BETTERTON, and which

possesses a great deal of whim and pleasantry, though in other respects it is a strange excentric thing. is nothing more than an alteration of MARSTON's play which again was wrought into a farce that at one time greatly succeeded, under the title of the *The Vintner Tricked*.

Paristaster ; or the Fawn, performed in 1606, is taken partly from The *Decameron* of BOCCACE, and partly from *Ovid*. It has particular merit, but is not so good a play as any other of the productions of MARSTON.

The *Wonder of Women ; or, Sophonisba*, produced in 1606. This play is rather imitated than copied from history, for the author himself says that he has not laboured in it to tye himself to relate every thing as a historian, but to enlarge every thing as a poet.

What you Will, a comedy, was brought out in 1607. This piece, which did but little itself, has provided materials for other dramatic productions since. It appears to be taken from PLAUTUS, but the equivoque of mistaking one person for another cannot properly be said to belong to any particular author ; it has been used in all times, and by all

writers; and so the circumstances vary it may be considered always as a novelty.

MARSTON having consulted regularity and correctness in the conduct of his plays, and besides having written them naturally, and both with humour and pathos, must rank before DECKER, and essentially, upon a par with CHAPMAN and HEYWOOD, especially when we are told that his poems rendered him still more celebrated than his plays. Being, however, a severe satirist, his cotemporaries were not willing to allow him his due portion of praise, and posterity cannot properly judge of his whole merit. What we know of him, however, ranks him very respectfully as a writer.

MARLOE, in the reign of JAMES the first, wrote *The Massacre of Paris*, a subject which has employed the pens of so many able writers. LEE wrought it into a play; but, without some interesting private story, the subject is too shocking for an audience. MERCIER in his *Bishop of Lisieux* has hit upon exactly the method to give it effect. He supposes a Protestant family protected by a Catholic bishop, who risks his situation and his life for their succour; in consequence of which the soldiery revolt from their inexorable duty, and the ravages of

CHARLES the ninth and his profligate court are put a stop to. Neither MARLOE nor LEE did any thing like this, and, therefore, this play is little known.

The tragical history of *Dr. Faustus* is spoken of in such vague terms, that, though it is necessary to say there was such a play, it is useless to say more. The *Jew of Malta* was ushered into the world by HEYWOOD, and is said to have been greatly received. *Lust's Dominion* was well received at first, and was afterwards altered by Mrs. BEHN, a circumstance all in the lady's way. We shall examine it hereafter under the title of *Abdelazar; or, the Moor's Revenge*.

These, with *Dido*, and *The Shepherd's Holiday*, in the first of which he joined NASH, and in the other DAY, are all we know of MARLOE. It is very probable he wrote more, and that he could have written better; but, with a mind divided by profligacy and debauchery, from that necessary study and necessary rectitude, by the bye, for the meritorious task of inculcating morality, indispensable in a dramatic writer, it is wonderful we have so much to praise in his public character from which

his private conduct obliges us so largely to deduct.

MIDDLETON, who produced one play in the reign of ELIZABETH, wrote sixteen dramatic productions afterwards, and in six more he was concerned with JONSON, FLETCHER, ROWLEY, and others.

The *Phœnix*, a tragi-comedy, performed in 1607, is well spoken of. The plot is taken from a Spanish novel called *The Force of Love*. *Michaelmas Term* is a mere undigested sketch*. *Your Five Gallants* was printed, but probably never performed. The *Family of Love*. All we know of this play is that SHIRLEY makes one of his characters speak of it in his *Lady of Pleasure*. *A Trick to Cheat the Old One*, performed in 1608. This comedy was a great favourite when it first came out, and is esteemed, among those who are

* Looking over a LANGBAINE, which I bought at LACKINGTON's because it contains some few marginal notes in the hand writing, as I suppose, of some former possessor, against this article which LANGBAINE says he can give no account of through the imperfection of his only copy, I find this remark, "I have a copy printed, as newly corrected, London; 1680."

in possession of old plays, as a piece of considerable merit.

A Mad World my Masters performed in 1608, was also a popular play. It is certainly a strange thing but it has a great deal of whim and humour of that broad latitude that, though it may not be correctly chaste, is, nevertheless, provokingly laughable. Mrs. BEHN, however, had no objection to this rich vein of humour, and has borrowed some of the most luscious parts of it for her *City Heiress*, and CHARLES JOHNSON, who, however, was contented with that part which was less offensive, availed himself of a part of the plot for his *Country Lasses*. Other authors have also gone to this source for materials.

The *Inner Temple Masque*, was one of those temporary things which were at that time performed upon some public occasion. It has been supposed to have furnished the hint of *Comus*, how truly it is difficult to say.

The *Game of Chess*. This was any thing you please but a play. It was symbolical of a dispute between the Church of ENGLAND and the Church of ROME, wherein, of course, the former was con-

queror. It was a stupid impolitic business, and ended, though in other respects it was very successful, in the author's losing the game, for he was sent to prison*.

A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, appeared and was soon forgotten. *No Wit, no Help like a Woman's* is a play of which there is no trace but the title. *Woman beware Woman*. This is a tragedy, and has for its date 1657, which is eight years after the Restoration. It must, however, have been originally performed in 1630 at latest, and it was probably, revived 1657 by sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, whose restoration of the stage has no doubt caused so many mistakes, his copies only being extant which writers

* In a copy of this play, in the possession of THOMAS PEARSON, esq. is the following memorandum in an old hand. "After nine days, wherein I have heard some of the actors say, they took fifteen hundred pounds, the Spanish fashion being prevalent, got it suppressed, and the author, Mr. THOMAS MIDDLETON, committed to prison, where he lay some time, and at last got out upon this petition to king JAMES :

"A harmless game coyned only for delight,
 "Was play'd betwixt the black house and the white.
 "The white house won. Yet still the black doth brag,
 "They had the power to put me in the bag.
 "Use but your royal hand, 'twill set me free,
 "'Tis but removing of a man, that's me,

"THOMAS MIDDLETON,"

have taken for originals. At this time it was known and greatly received. What was its original success cannot be known *.

More dissemblers besides Women. This play is extant but no author pretends to say any thing about its success. *Any thing for a quiet Life.* From this play, of which we know nothing but that it was printed in 1662, I shall take a hint and content myself once for all with setting down dates, and leaving the reader to consider of the probability of whether the plays they are prefixed to were originally performed at that time or not.

Before I take my leave of this subject, however, I shall briefly reiterate that no date, from about 1634 to the Restoration, can be relied on, and I leave it, in all cases as well as the present, to the good sense of those who may think this an object of any material consequence, as my friends the ad-

RICHARDS, a writer in the reign of CHARLES the second, speaks in the highest terms, but in curious language by the bye, of this play in a poem he had written expressly to praise it. He finishes thus:

I that have seen't, can say, having just cause,
Ne'er tragedy came off with more applause.

Now, though this is bad poetry, it may be good truth, and if literally so, this play must have been popular, for he does not pledge himself, but the audience,

vertisers call it, "to read and compare," in which case I expect to be acquitted of intentional error whenever I set down any thing that nobody can possibly believe, such as that MIDDLETON produced one play in the forty-third year of ELIZABETH's reign, and another in the fourteenth year of the reign of CHARLES the second. But the spirit of this will be easily given me when we consider MIDDLETON as a cotemporary of SHAKESPEAR and not of DRYDEN. In this particular instance LANGBAIN bears me out, who thinks all MIDDLETON's plays were performed before the civil wars—and so no doubt were MASSINGER's—particularly *Any thing for a quiet Life*, and the reason he gives for this opinion is that it was published, as well as the *Phoenix*, the *Game of Chesse*, and the *Family of Love*, by KIRKMAN, who knew so much of the plays performed at that time and was so careful to attribute each to its proper owner.

The pieces in which MIDDLETON was joined by other writers are *The Roaring Girl*, *The Fair Quarrel*, *The Widow*, *The Changeling*, *The Spanish Gipsy*, and *The Old Law*; all which, except the *Changeling*, which we are told met with considerable applause, are very little spoken of by the various writers on the drama.

There are other things attributed to MIDDLETON, but with nothing like certainty, and in particular that in a piece, called *The Witch*, he furnished SHAKESPEAR with the hint of his witches in *Macbeth*; but when we recollect how very poorly JONSON imitated them, we can hardly suppose our great poet, in his own particular province, where he upon every occasion so completely left all the world behind him, stood in need of a cue from MIDDLETON; who, though he was a respectable writer, and made no mean stand as a dramatist, had nothing in his genius that could furnish instruction to SHAKESPEAR.

CHAP. V.

WEBSTER, ROWLEY, AND THE INFERIOR DRAMATIC POETS.

IT will yet be necessary to mention a third class of dramatic poets; which, though inferior to those noticed already, were considered as men of talents.

WEBSTER, who frequently wrote in conjunction with DECKER, MARSTON, and ROWLEY, ventured now and then to go alone. There are six plays published with his name to them, under the titles of *The White Devil*, *The Devil's Law Case*, *The Duchess of Malfy*, *Appius and Virginia**, *The Thracian Wonder*, and *A Cure for a Cuckold*.

* There is a play called *Appius and Virginia*, entered in the books of the Stationer's Company, by RICHARD JONNES, in 1577, the title page of which describes the conduct of VIRGINIA, "as a rare example of the virtue of chastity in wishing rather to be slain by her own father's hand than to be deflowered by the wicked judge APPIUS." We have also seen this subject very early among the French Moralities.

The first of these plays we have no particular account of, the second which is partly borrowed from the story of PHÆREUS JASON, in *Velerius Maximus*, and partly from the *Histoires admirable of GAULART*, met with applause; the third, taken from LOPEZ de VEGA, GOULART, and BONDELLO, had also success; the fourth was revived and altered by BETTERTON, and the fifth, and sixth, in which some say ROWLEY had a hand, were both received with applause. WEBSTER, however, does not appear at any time to so much advantage as in those pieces wherein he laboured with others, his best knack being more to find out materials for his associates than to give form to them, for he was a parish clerk, and an assistant at a school, neither of which occupations seems very much calculated to give his genius scope, whatever talents he might possess,

ROWLEY was an actor as well as an author. He was very much esteemed, and, in his manners, and being intimately acquainted with all the wits of his time, and carressed by persons of the first fashion, he a good deal resembled the French actor RAISIN, of whom I have already spoken, and to whom, for his wit, for his elegance, and for his gentlemanly qualities, I could find a finished likeness in an actor now living, whose abilities would honour

any merit, and whose intimacy would throw a lustre upon any rank.

It is very probable that the advice and assistance of ROWLEY were of the utmost service to the inferior authors of that day; his part of their conjunctive task being of course to fit the work to the stage, of which department he may be supposed to have had a better judgment than them.

Those plays in which he was connected with others have been mentioned already. There are, however, six, which he is said to have written without assistance. Their titles are, *New Wonder ; or, a Woman never Vexed*, *All's Lost by Lust*, *A Match at Midnight*, *A Shoemaker is a Gentleman*, *The Birth of Merlin*, and the *Witch of Edmonton*.

In most of these plays there are diverting circumstances. They are generally taken from old Novels, which he seems to have been well able to dramatize. DODSLEY has printed the *Match at Midnight* in his old Plays, which is full of very pleasant intrigue, and, in the *Birth of Merlin*, SHAKESPEAR is said to have lent ROWLEY assistance, which, though the opinion is not ill supported, seems very

unlikely. The suspicion, however, is greatly honourable to ROWLEY, if it was begotten by a perusal of his writings, but even then it depends upon who were the judges, for till the world at large give their never failing decision upon occasions of such nice discrimination, the conofcente are too often miserably gulled out of their reason by their own consent; a lamentable truth, of which we have had recent proof.

DAY, who appears to have been well educated, had a hand in some of the plays produced early in the reign of JAMES the first, with DECKER, ROWLEY, and others, particularly *The Travels of three English Brothers*, *Guy Earl of Warwick*, and *The Maiden's Holiday*. He also wrote, unassisted, *The Isle of Gulls*, which is taken from sir PHILIP SIDNEY's *Arcadia*, and had success; *Humour out of Breath*, of which we know nothing but the title; *Law Tricks*, which one author calls an admirable play, though no other appears able to give any account of it; *The Parliament of Bees*, which was nothing more than conversations between twelve personages, something in the style of the Moralities; and the *Blind Beggar of Bethnel Green*, from which DODSLEY took the materials for his ballad farce under the same title.

LORD STIRLING rose by his merit, from obscurity to a coronet. During the minority of JAMES the sixth of SCOTLAND, he improved by a polite and elegant education, those brilliant parts he inherited from nature. He obtained the patronage of the earl of ARGYLE, whose favour he won in quality of tutor while they were abroad, and, this introducing him to court, he was carressed, admired, and consulted by the first ranks; till, by able conduct, great merit, and a series of fortunate circumstances, he was made Secretary of State, created afterwards a viscount, and at length an earl. His dramatic works are *Darius*, *Cræsus*, *The Alexandrian Tragedy* and *Julius Cæsar*.

The first of these tragedies was a mere juvenile effort and can never be considered in a perfect light, as it was full of Scottisms, and by no means calculated for the stage. The second has a much better claim to attention, but it is wholly borrowed from *Herodotus*; and, indeed, all the works of this author are an imitation of the ancients, and particularly of the phlegmatic SENECA. The third, in which the ghost of AALEXANDER is the principal part, and which is founded upon the differences that arose among the chiefs of AALEXANDER as to who was to succeed him, is still more extravagant.

When he bequeathed his crown "to the most worthy," perhaps he had it in view to perplex the world as much after his death as he had done while living. He succeeded at any rate with this author, for the subject is so complicate for a play, that with a great deal of good writing, and much classical knowledge, it was not in his power to bring the council of MELEAGER and PERDICIAS to any rational conclusion.

The fourth piece, *Julius Cæsar*, is a subject so familiar to every reader, that it is unnecessary to say more than that lord STIRLING has shewn in it a competent knowledge of the Roman History, and commented on that part of it with sound judgment; but this play is not more regular nor better constructed than any one of the others, and indeed the author seems not to have gone so much for perfect dramatic pieces, as for mere erudite productions, for he calls them very emphatically four monarchic tragedies, and, his bringing in the chorus between the acts, and dressing up the matter in all the heavy and turgid pomp of SENECA, shews that it was his ambition more to be admired in the closet than on the stage.

Sir FULK GREVILLE, lord BROOK, whose life

may be read at large in FULLER's *British Worthies*, who was born the same year with sir PHILIP SIDNEY, who was a great favourite of queen ELIZABETH, by whom he was created a lord, and who was distinguished by his learning and his courage, has a claim to notice here in consequence of his having written two tragedies called *Alaham*, and *Mustapha*. They were, however, never acted, being upon the model of those of lord STIRLING, full of declamation, and explained by choruses. Lord BROOK, however, if he was not witty himself was the cause of wit in others; for, like his friend, he was a most liberal patron and benefactor to the dramatic writers.

This amiable and celebrated character was murdered at the age of seventy-four by one of his dependants named HAYWOOD; who, not thinking his services sufficiently requited, mortally stabbed his master, and afterwards, to avoid an ignominious death, destroyed himself. This was in Brook House, Holborn, where Brook Street now stands. On his monument in WARWICK Church, lord BROOK is styled servant to queen ELIZABETH, counsellor to king JAMES, and friend to sir PHILIP SIDNEY.

FIELD, of whom a good deal is conjectured,

because but little is known, wrote two plays, called *Women is a Weathercock*, and *Amends for the Ladies*. These plays LANGBAINÉ tells us will still bear reading. I rather think, however, it must be by those who are endowed with patience. They have nevertheless good materials but are full of strange irregularities.

The first is dedicated to any woman who is not a weathercock, by which the author means quaintly to insinuate that it is dedicated to nobody. It is warmly commended by CHAPMAN. The second is an apology, or, as the author calls it, an amends to the fair sex, for having written a satyr against them in his first play. It is imitated from the *Curious Impertinent* in DON QUIXOTE, which has been since treated on the French stage both by BROUSSE and DESTOUCHES, and is also the subject of *The City Night Cap*, *The Amorous Prince*, and *The Curious Husband*.

It is not settled whether FIELD the author, and FIELD the actor were the same person. We hear of a letter written by ROBERTS, the actor, to POPE, wherein he asserts that the FIELD in question was the same whose name is always joined with HEMMINGS, BURBAGE, and CONDEL, and the rest of that

company, placed before the folio edition of SHAKESPEAR'S works, and also in the *dramatis personæ* prefixed to the *Cynthia's Revels* of JONSON, but say those who quote this authority, "it is more probable" that the FIELD, who was a fellow of New College, "OXFORD, was the author." This, however, does not, with me, clear up the point at all; a good education being no more an impediment to good acting than to good writing.

FORD was one of the associates of ROWLEY and the rest. He also wrote eleven plays without their assistance, one of which, *'Tis a pity She's a Whore*, DODSLEY has printed in his collection of old Plays, and which, of course, is the best, as no man knew how to select with more judgment. He has, however, chosen it, no doubt, for the writing, which is in many parts, strong and poetical, for nothing can be more revolting than the subject; and, therefore, the warmer and more glowing the pictures of love are worked up, the more reprehensible is the author, because the deeper is the wound given to honour, and to decorum.

"But," say the critics, "the title bears out the
"the author, and the catastrophe is so shocking that
"that all those who may be inclined to practise

“such monstrous crimes, will be warned by it.” Nothing can be more false than such argument. No warning, no catastrophe can deter such wretches as are here described; and, as to the title, Is ANNA-BELLA merely a strumpet? No; she is the strumpet of her brother. And is she to be pitied for that? Such reasoning is equally monstrous, ridiculous, and supererogate, and of course reprehensible; for it is not the province of a dramatic writer to seek for monsters, and to record prodigies; is it his duty to reprobate such vices as are commonly known, and often practised, in which catalogue, for the honour of human nature, incest without a motive has no place; but if it had, it ought to be introduced as a deed of darkness which could not be pleaded for or argued on, even by the wretches themselves, therefore, all we can say in favour of FORD is, to wish he had employed his beautiful writing to a more laudable purpose.

The *Lover's Melancholy*. This was a tragi-comedy, and we find it highly commended by verses from different friends. The most remarkable circumstance concerning it, however, was its success, and its consequence. It came out in the same week that JONSON produced his *New Inn*, and was received warmly, while the other was damned, both

owing in great measure to the enemies that JONSON had conjured up, as we shall see by and by more particularly. This cynical, pedantic churl, who could not bear such success in a young author, for it was FORD's first play, among other ridiculous conduct, charged him with having stolen his materials from SHAKESPEAR's papers, with the connivance of HEMMING and CONDEL; and this, together with other foreneffes, brought about JONSON's ears a thousand squibs, one of which was called, *Old Ben's light heart made heavy by young John's Melancholy Lover*.

Love's Sacrifice, The Broken Heart, Perkin Warbeck, The Fancies Chaste and Noble, and The Ladies Tryal, are spoken of as having had success. They were well patronized, and highly commended by different poets, who were, perhaps, as happy to see the envious JONSON nettled, as the modest unassuming FORD carressed. *Beauty in a Trance, The Royal Combat, An ill beginning has a good End*, and *The London Merchant*, are also said to have succeeded; but they are lost to the world through the same carelessness of Mr. WARBURTON's servant, by which we were deprived of so many of MASSENGER's plays.

DANIEL, had his dramatic writings being equal to his historic, would have claimed a forwarder place in this work. He was born two years before SHAKESPEAR, and embellished the reign of ELIZABETH, as we have seen by giving to history a polish which till then was unknown to it. The accounts concerning him are very contradictory, some averring that he only lived fifty-seven years, and others eighty. These are points, however, which I always steer clear of investigating, fearing to imitate those who are anxious to tell their readers how long an author lived, rather than to shew whether he lived to any good purpose.

The dramatic pieces of DANIEL are six in number; among which, *Cleopatra* was esteemed a well written production, but not well calculated for representation; The *Queen's Arcadia*, a compliment to queen ANNE, consort of JAMES the first, is said to have been borrowed from QUINAULT's *Comedie Sans Comedies*, and RANDOLPH's *Amyntas*, which is so far from the truth, that at the time this play came out, RANDOLPH was in his cradle, and QUINAULT was not born till nearly seventy years afterwards. *Tethy's Festival* was a thing merely written in honour of the unfortunate CHARLES, when he was created Prince of Wales, *Hymen's Triumph* was

also an occasional thing on the nuptials of lord ROXBOROUGH, and *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* was again complimentary, DANIEL having written it as an allegorical representation of the blessings of peace enjoyed under JAMES the first. So that it is plain he wrote his dramatic pieces in quality of poet laureat, and that he worked hard for his But of Sack.

This, indeed, is the worst trait in the character of DANIEL, for the subjects of his productions were little worthy the verses bestowed upon them, and indeed, were we to take all we know of history, we should find upon a comparison that the worst vices of bad men have been often glossed over by good poets, while the best virtues of good men have passed unrecorded; and the reason is evident. Vice needs the ablest talents to defend it; virtue is its own advocate; and thus it is only that, by a collective review of various exertions, characters are accorded legitimate fame.

The other play of DANIEL, called *Philotas*, is said to have very nearly jostled him out of his seat as poet laureat on account of a report, supposed to have been connived at by JONSON who succeeded to that honourable post after him. This report was that DANIEL, in the character of PHILOTAS, had

brought forward the unfortunate earl of ESSEX, a subject certainly of too tender a nature to touch on at that time, and the consequences became so serious that he was under the necessity of vindicating himself in an apology printed at the end of the play.

The fact of this report having been propagated there can be no doubt of, but the ground on which it is supposed that JONSON connived at it is not firm, for it is presumed upon under an idea that the play made its first appearance in 1606, which is the period admitted by every writer that I have looked into; but it has not the least probability to support it. I have no doubt the mistake has arisen from a supposition that DANIEL was only laureat to JAMES the first, whereas he succeeded to that situation at the death of SPENCER, four years before the death of ELIZABETH, during which time no doubt he brought out this play. Hence the predicament into which his enemies attempted to plunge him, and this speaks for itself; for what did JAMES care about the earl of ESSEX?

I do not, however, mean to say that this exculpates JONSON, whose envy was no doubt as tingling in the reign of ELIZABETH as in the reign of JAMES, and the hateful bent of whose private cha-

racter needs not this trait to magnify its deformity. My intention is only to give an added proof how little dates are to be relied upon, and to rectify false *ipse dixit*s by detecting them through circumstances. The fact upon this principle as to DANIEL'S plays is, that *Philotas*, which is allowed on all hands to be his first, he wrote in the reign of ELIZABETH; and, having had a taste of that danger he was likely to run among his enemies at court, he deferred his other dramatic writings till the next reign; when, in order to keep on the safe side of the post, he went into the other extreme and quitted satire for adulation.

BREWER has been considered by all authors as a dramatic writer, and by many as a man of talents nearly equal to SHAKESPEAR, and yet some of them give him credit but for two plays of which they suspect one was written by somebody else. From such materials as these are writers obliged to collect history.

As the particulars of this dispute are a little extraordinary I shall go into them in some degree by way of a lesson to credulous readers. BREWER is said, by those who are willing to allow him, perhaps, more than the full extent of his merit, to have written six

play under the titles of *Landgartha*, *Love's Dominion*, *Love's Loadstone*, *Lingua*, *The Country Girl*, and *The Love Sick King*, and those who accord him this portion of fame, if it be any, among whom are WINSTANLEY, and PHILLIPS, say also that he was a man of most extraordinary genius, which is recorded in a poem, called *Steps to Parnassus*, where he is supposed to have the magic power of calling in the Muses to his assistance; thus becoming to SHAKESPEAR that sort of rival that HESIOD is said to have been to HOMER.

LANGBAINÉ, JACOB, GILDON, and others, however, allow him to have been author of only the last two, and LANGBAINÉ suspects one of these not to have belonged to him because it was published with the initials T. B. whereas had it been BREWER'S, it must have been A. B. which conjecture certainly has probability enough to support it.

The rest, who have been at some pains to ascertain the truth in this business, congratulate themselves upon having DODSLEY'S positive authority that, in addition to these two plays, BREWER wrote *Lingua*. Now this happens not to be the truth, for DODSLEY gives no positive opinion on the

subject, but says merely that WINSTANLEY has given this play to BREWER, but that LANGBAINE will not allow it to belong to him, which is all perfectly right in DODSLEY, his business being to collect old plays belong to whom they might. He, therefore, pledges himself to none of these opinions; but, on the contrary, says that CROMWELL, having performed at CAMBRIDGE the part of TACTUS in the play, which is a contention among the senses for a crown, it has been foolishly said, by WINSTANLEY, LANGBAINE, and the rest, to have inspired him with ambition *.

* As this anecdote is rather curious, and has found its way into most of the accounts of this author, improbable as it is, it may not be amiss to notice that the part of TACTUS, or TOUCH, which was allotted to CROMWELL, has in it this extraordinary speech:

Roses, and bays, pack hence! this crown and robes,
My brows, and body, circles and invests:
How gallantly it fits me!—sure the slave
Measured my head that wrought this coronet.—
They lie that say, complexions cannot change!
My blood's enobled, and I am transform'd
Unto the sacred temper of a king.
Methinks I hear my noble parasites
Stiling me CÆSAR, or great ALEXANDER,
Licking my feet, &c.

This he is said to have spoken and felt with such force and energy that it bred in him the first ideas of that sanguinary ambition which began with blood, was supported by terror, and which, at length, calmed into melioration.

To shew the reader, however, how far this author merits so much contention, and to what a degree he was so dangerous a rival to SHAKESPEAR, *Lingua*, though it has some good writing, is little better than one of the Moralties; *The Country Girl* is not known enough for any author to give a description of it, and *The Love Sick King* was only preserved to be altered into a very poor piece, called *The Perjured Nun*; and as to the other three plays, the very same authors, who insist they were written by BREWER, give *Landgartha* to BURRELL, *Love's Dominion* to FLECKNOE, and as to *Love's Loadstone* it has so lost its attraction, if it ever had any, they have not been able to find it at all: so completely have they deserted the fame of their their favourite and their own consistency; which, that it may be all of a piece, has been so correct that they do not even know when BREWER wrote, for they make OLIVER CROMWELL act originally in *Lingua*, who must have been but eight years old when that play, if it may be called so, was published.

Of these authors I have, perhaps, given a more particular account than their merits or my limits warranted. I had a mind, however, to notice as much of their celebrity as would serve to strengthen the reputation which the stage held in this early yet

remarkable era; but there were many other dramatic writers some of whom I shall slightly mention.

BARNES, who was the son of a bishop, and served in the army under the celebrated and unfortunate earl of ESSEX, wrote a play called *The Devil's Charter*, in which he has endeavoured to hand down to execration that most contemptible of all characters Pope ALEXANDER the sixth. He has framed his play upon the model of PERICLES, Prince of TYRE, for having taken his story from GUICCIARDINI, he makes him his interlocutor exactly as the other author conjures up GOWER, the old English bard, for the same purpose.

TO BASKER, of whom we have little certain intelligence, is attributed a play called *The Bloody Banquet*, but with very little propriety perhaps, because the initials J. D. are prefixed to it. BELCHIER DRAWBRIDGECOURT wrote or translated a strange thing called *Hans Beer Pot's invisible Comedy*; so uncertain, however, is all the intelligence we procure concerning such authors, particularly as they get more insignificant, that this piece has been ascribed to NASH.

BROWNE, whose works were collected and
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published something more than twenty years ago, wrote, in 1623, a dramatic piece called *The Inner Temple Masque*. CAMPION, a physician in the reign of JAMES the first, was author of two complimentary pieces in the style of those written by DANIEL. COOK wrote a comedy which DODSLEY has thought it worth his while to publish in his old Plays. It was called *Green's Tu Quoque*, and written in compliment to an actor who had a method of jeering, or as it is called at this day, of quizzing, his friends, by uttering comically those words*.

TAILOR wrote *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*, a strange comedy, that DODSLEY has, however, to give an idea of the contrast between different early writers, published also in his twelve volumes. TOMKIS certainly wrote well, and probably more than was attributed to him. We can point to nothing, however, but *Albumazar*, from which DRY-

* HEYWOOD, in his preface to the play, gives this actor the following character. "There was not an actor of his nature in his time, of better ability in his performance of what he undertook, more applauded by the audience, of better grace at court, or of more general love in the city." On the back of the title is this distich, which shews that the actor, as well as the author, was then dead.

How fast bleak Autumn changeth FLORA's dye !
What yesterday was GREEN, now's fear and dry.

DEN has accused JONSON of having pilfered his *Alchymist*. This fact has been warmly disputed upon the old rotten ground of relying upon dates, which, in most of the writers, substantiate that the *Alchymist* was performed four years before *Albuzmazar*; but we have seen how vague these sort of authorities generally are and it is very unlikely that DRYDEN should commit himself upon this subject without being perfectly satisfied of what he asserted.

MASON wrote a tragedy called *Meleastes the Turk*, of which nothing is noticed but that the author had a better opinion of it than it deserved. MACHIN, whose name has been rescued from oblivion by DODSLEY, who published his comedy called *The Dumb Knight*, hardly deserved that compliment, for it is one of the worst in the collection. SHARPMAN is scarcely known, and the poor glimmering of his merit that has reached us is through a borrowed light in the shape of a comedy called *The Fliere*, which he stole from MARSTON'S *Parasitaster*.

GOSSON wrote three pieces, one of which was a Morality. They were not printed, and what we know of them from report is vague and unimportant. TOURNEUR also wrote three pieces

which we know as little about. A cotemporary has of him this notable remark.

His fame unto that pitch was only raised,
As not to be despised, nor over praised.

WILKINS wrote a piece called *The Miseries of enforced Marriage*, which was very little celebrated, although Mrs. BEHN thought it worth while to steal from it the plot of her comedy called *The Town Fop*. LEGG wrote two plays which were performed at CAMBRIDGE, where he was twice Vice Chancellor, so there can be but little doubt of their having succeeded. They were not printed, however, nor can any account be given of them.

These authors DYMCK, BARRY, and others, make up all who, during the time of SHAKESPEAR and JONSON, were publicly known as dramatic writers; but there were anonymous plays produced to the number of about thirty, besides those already mentioned, some of which are now known, and two or three of them are in DODSLEY's collection; and now, having pretty well cleared my ground, I shall have better opportunity of giving fair play to JONSON; a review of the remainder of whose works await the reader's attention.

CHAP. VI.

JONSON RESUMED.

I SHALL now proceed to a final examination of the works of JONSON ; who, after the death of ELIZABETH, produced one tragedy and nine comedies, besides a great variety of occasional complimentary masques, principally in quality of poet laureat.

Volpone ; or the Fox, was performed in 1605, and has been generally considered as JONSON's best production. Certainly the plot is upon a very meritorious principal, and the characters are forcibly drawn. A knave who feigns illness in order to impose upon knaves, and cheat them of their money by working up their credulity into a belief that each shall become his heir, is one of the boldest ideas of a character that can be conceived, and yet moral justice is rendered more complete by making that knave imposed upon by another of yet superior cunning ; shewing that the machinations of the wicked, be they ever so subtle, are constantly counteracted by the same devil that inspired them.

The group of characters that are introduced to work up those materials, are full of contrast, strength, and nature; would not one think it, therefore, very extraordinary that this piece, even supported by admirable acting, has never greatly succeeded? Nothing, considered superficially, can be so unaccountable; but, when the subject is fairly investigated, nothing can be more clearly comprehended. Quaint, dry, studied correctness, unsupported by quickness, spirit, and fire, can never satisfy. The author in this piece conducts us into a uniform and proportionable building, presents us with an entertainment, and introduces us to company, but the apartments are cheerless vaults, the viands are carved marble, and the guests are statues,

The same objections lie against the *Silent Woman*, though upon the whole, perhaps, it is a better play for general approbation; but it must not be denied that with the same faults it possesses at least the same perfections. This piece is partly taken from OVID, partly from JUVENAL, and partly from PLAUTUS, and, therefore, possesses the merit of an excellent imitation; a quality JONSON was better acquainted with than invention. DRYDEN, has gone at large into an examination of this play, but nothing can prove that it has that sterling attraction which begets for a dramatic production universal satisfaction; not even

that judicious and sensible alteration of it by COLMAN, which was brought out, yet not with very warm success, in 1776, at Drury Lane.

The *Cafe is Altered*, performed in 1609, is one of the poorest of this author's productions. It is in some respects borrowed from PLAUTUS, but does no great credit either to the original or the imitator; in short, it is one of those instances which we notice through all his works how bounded and contracted JONSON's talent's were; which seldom reached to nature or her best imitators the Greeks, but were satisfied with copying those clumsy apes of them the Romans. What should we say of a sculptor who contentedly made MICHAEL ANGELO, admirable as he was, the exclusive model of his imitation, forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that such an artist ever existed as PHIDIAS.

The *Alchymist* was performed in 1610. This comedy, which was laudably written to ridicule a prevailing folly, must, no doubt, have been greatly successful originally, since we have seen it very much followed and admired during the time GARRICK ornamented the stage. His incomparable performance, however, of ABEL DRUGGER was a considerable drawback from the proper reputation of the author, and in great measure the cause of the

success of the play; at the same time it must be confessed that the best acting can do nothing without good materials, with which certainly the *Alchymist* abounds.

JONSON's best position as the foundation of his plays has been the old proverb, "when knaves fall out honest men come by their own," and this he has often successfully played upon. In the present instance his knaves, by not being very great rogues, and by employing their art only to work upon credulity, beget an uncommon interest, and the audience almost applaud the waggery of FACE, and the dry humour of SUBTLE, upon principle. The *Alchymist*, however, will probably never again be celebrated; but this is more owing to the subject, which of course grows every day in a greater degree obsolete, than to any deficiency in its dramatic requisites, although the insuperable objection to JONSON in a degree prevails here as well as every where else; for though his comic characters do not actually wear the buskin, yet the sock has such high heels and is made of such stiff materials, that the characters stalk instead of trip, and thus we have quaintness for nature, affectation for grace, and awkwardness for ease*.

* The farther we search, the more we shall have reason to

Bartholomew Fair, performed in 1614. This strange play, out of which might be framed the humour of half a dozen farces, is fuller, perhaps, of comic characters than any thing that ever appeared on the stage. We are given to understand that JONSON wrote it purposely to ridicule the age in which he lived, for the prevalent preference given to low wit, instead of polished and refined writing. If this was his motive he has outwitted himself,

support DRYDEN in his opinion that the characters of the *Alchymist* was borrowed from *Albumazar*. LANGBAIN chuses to be neuter upon this subject, but he does resort to the silly doctrine of dates to defend either opinion. After all, however, we cannot doubt but DRYDEN would never have made so positively and in such unqualified terms, an assertion of this kind without the clearest proof; but, if there were any material doubt, COXETER pretty well settles it by shewing that *Albumazar* was written at a very early period but that it was common, on account of the manuscript being kept unprinted in the hands of the actors, to date a play from the time it first made its way into the world from the press, instead of the period when it was originally performed, especially the productions of obscure authors, and this easily finishes the business; for TOMKIS, being very little known, found it difficult to get his play published, while JONSON took care, no doubt, to bring forward his productions, not only immediately on their first appearance, but with all possible pomp. The lines in DRYDEN's prologue are these:

SUBTLE was got by our ALBUMAZER,
That ALCHYMIST by that Astrologer;
Here he was fashion'd, and we may suppose
He lik'd the fashion well, who wore the cloaths.

for there is more nature in *Bartholomew Fair* than in any one of his other works; but yet, being as it is, crammed full of extraneous and heterogeneous incidents, he has as much overshot the mark as he had come short of it in his *Cataline*, which this play was written purposely to defend; that tragedy having nothing interesting in it, on account of its dullness and declamation; and this comedy, on account of its wildness and extravagance.

The *Devil's an Ass*, produced in 1616. This comedy is not mentioned by any writer as having had extraordinary reputation. The circumstance of giving the cloak to the husband for permission to make love to the wife is taken from BOCCACE, which has been since used in the *Magnifique*, and from thence borrowed by Mrs. CENTLIVRE. Parts of this play may be read with pleasure, but no talents, however able, could give it a form that might entitle it to success on the stage.

The *Staple of News*. This comedy, which according to the date appeared originally in 1625, was very probably soon discontinued, for it has the fault of *Every Man out of his Humour*, and is conveyed to the audience through the medium of a grex. There is in it, what will be found every where in JONSON, sound sense and shrewd observation, but it

is sense and observation couched in terms which, though they may be written, will never be spoken; and it is this eternal objection to the pieces of this author, that will ever keep them aloof from the theatre.

The New Inn ; or, the Light Heart. This comedy made its appearance in 1631, and was so ill received that JONSON, whose merit, great as it was, fell upon all occasions short of his insolence, instead of wisely pocketing the affront, and mending his errors, whether in judgment or in calculation, for the future, printed his play with a libel against its actors and its auditors at its head. The trait is curious, and therefore I shall transcribe the title.

“ *The New Inn ; or a Light Heart.* A comedy
 “ never acted but most negligently played by some
 “ of the king’s servants and more squeamishly be-
 “ held and censured by others, the king’s subjects,
 “ 1629. Now at last set at liberty to the readers,
 “ his majesty’s servants and subjects, to be judged.”

Were not this a fact to which the world has borne testimony, it could not be credited that a man of talents should be so contemptibly arrogant, so pitifully vain, so grossly ignorant of sound sense and decorous propriety, as to erect himself into a despotic

dictator in the empire of poetry, and impudently announce that men ought to think and feel when and how he should think proper to give them leave, or else, like PETER's fiat in *The Tale of the Tub*, be damned they and theirs to all eternity; and yet this state, strong as it may appear, is not a particle short of the real truth; for not content with the above pompous title, by which one would think he forbade any reasonable being to read his play, he prefixed to it a sort of anathema, by way of an ode, which I shall transcribe that my readers may judge him by his own words. It is addressed to that god of his idolatry, himself.

Come leave the loathed stage,
And the more loathsome age:
Where pride and impudence (in fashion knit)
Usurp the chair of wit!
Inditing and arrainging every day
Something they call a play.
Let their fastidious, vain
Commission of the braine
Run on, and rage, sweat, censure, and condemn:
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

Say that thou pour'st them wheat,
And they will acorns eat,
'Twere simple fury, still, thyself to waste
On such as have no taste!
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread,
Whose appetites are dead!
No, give them grains their fill,
Husks, draff, to drink and swill,

If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,
 Envy them not their palate, with the swine*.

No doubt some mouldy tale,
 Like *Pericles*†; and stale
 As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish—
 scraps, out of every dish,
 Thrown forth, and rak'd into the common-tub,
 May keep up the Play Club:
 There sweepings do as well
 As the best order'd meal.
 For, who the relish of these guests will fit,
 Needs set them, but The Almes-basket of Wit.
 And much good do't you then:
 Brave plush, and velvet men;

* This accusation can never, at any time, nor upon any occasion obtain. The taste of the town is frequently corrupted, and vitiated, and perhaps, like a confirmed scrofula cannot be cured from some remaining scurvy taint. Fashion, whim, patronage, or whatever administers to the reigning folly will do all this; but it is always partial, and, like other alloys in life, sets off the returning pleasure to newer advantage. To brand, therefore, a whole kingdom for gross ignorance, corrupt taste, and the want of all feeling, for which the head and heart are best distinguished, and that because a single audience condemned a play, be its merits what it might, is a trait of superlative insolence that, for the honour of genius, certainly never was conceived nor executed but by the malignant mind and the caustic pen of JONSON.

† This arrow was of course intended to glance at SHAKESPEAR, and, across the burning envy which lugged him into this folly, a very left handed judgment, induced him to point out the weakest play of his great rival: but BEN with all his anticipation of fame had no prescience; indeed how should he look into time whose vanity hoodwinked him every hour he lived? Otherwise he would

Can feed on orts: and safe in your stage clothes,
 Dare quit upon your oaths,
 The staggers, and the stage-wrights too (your peers)
 Of larding your large ears
 With their foul comic socks;
 Wrought upon twenty blocks:
 Which, if they're torn, and turn'd, and patched enough,
 The gamesters share your guilt, and you their stuff.

Leave things to prostitute,
 And take the Alcæick lute;
 Or thine own HORACE, or ANACREON's lyre;
 Warm thee by PINDAR's fire:
 And tho' thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be cold,
 E're years have made thee old;
 Strike that disdainful heat
 Throughout, to their defeat:
 As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,
 May, blushing, swear no palfey's in thy brain.

But when they hear thee sing
 The glories of thy king,
 His zeal to God, and his just awe o'er men;
 They may blood shaken then,
 Feel such flesh-quake to possess their powers;
 As they shall cry like ours
 In sound of peace, or wars,
 No harp ere hit the stars,
 In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign:
 And raising CHARLES his chariot 'bove his wain*.

have seen that the weakest works of SHAKESPEARE were more calculated for the approbation of posterity than his strongest.

* At the end of the last Stanza but one, JONSON, though he has exhausted all the gall in his ink, seems to shrink from his own cause and, therefore, shelters himself under the wings of monarchy in that

Having written this ode, JONSON seems to have fit down contentedly under the blind idea that he had corrected the age, and indeed so he had in one respect, for he had convinced that public, who had showered down numerous favours on him, that he was unworthy so generous a protection. In the idea, however, that what he had done was unanswerable, he was so deceived, that FELTHAM, an inferior poet, produced a sort of parody on his ode, or rather an answer to every article of it, that threw him and his insolent pretensions most completely into ridicule. Attend to FELTHAM.

Come leave this faucy way
 Of baiting those that pay
 Dear for the sight of your declining wit:
 'Tis known it is not fit,
 That a false poet, just contempt once thrown,
 Should cry up thus his own.
 I wonder by what dower,
 Or patent, you had power
 From all to rape a judgement. Let's suffice,
 Had you been modest, y'ad been granted wife.

which follows; by which means in this damning ode, where he so comfortably conceives he has eclipsed PINDAR, and fulminated a fiat forbidding all poets to write from that moment, he has emulated the bellman at Christmas, or rather the town cryer; who, when he has cried down a runaway wife, or apprentice, whom he warns the world not to trust, vociferates God save the King! but however laudable, upon proper occasions, it may be for poets, whether laureat or not, to manifest their loyalty, the poet in the present instance would have given the public a better idea of his confidence in his own cause if he had kept his eulogium for his next birth day ode.

'Tis known you can do well,
 And that you do excel,
 As a translator ; but when things require
 A *genius*, and a fire,
 Not kindled heretofore by others pains ;
 As oft you've wanted brains
 And art to strike the white,
 As you have levell'd right :
 Yet if men vouch not things apochryphal,
 You bellow, rave, and spatter round your gall.
 Jugg, Pierce, Peek, Fly *, and all
 Your jests so nominal,
 Are things so far beneath an able brain,
 As they do throw a stain
 Thro' all th' unlikely plot, and do displease
 As deep as Pericles.
 Where yet there is not laid
 Before a chambermaid
 Discourse so weigh'd † as might have serv'd of old
 For schools, when they of love and valour told.
 Why rage then ? when the show
 Should judgment be and know——‡
 ledge, there in Plush who scorns to drudge
 For stages, yet can judge
 Not only poets looser lines, but wits,
 And all their perquisites.

* These were names by which JONSON, in his different satires meant to distinguish dramatic writers or performers.

† This hit is very neat, and ridicules very aptly the absurdity of JONSON, who in *The New Inn* makes a character address a chambermaid in language which has all the logic and subtilty of the schools.

‡ This break is purposely made by FELTHAM to ridicule BEN for having done the same thing in the third stanza of his ode.

A gift as rich, as high
 Is noble posie :
 Yet tho, in sport it be for kings a play,
 'Tis next mechanics, when it works for pay.

ALCÆUS lute had none,
 Nor loose ANACREON,
 E're taught so bold assuming of the bays,
 When they deserv'd no praise.
 To rail men into approbation,
 Is new to yours alone ;
 And prospers not : For know,
 Fame is as coy, as you
 Can be disdainful ; and who dares to prove
 A rape on her, shall gather scorn, not love.

Leave then this humour vain,
 And this more humourous strain,
 Where self-conceit, and choler of the blood
 Eclipse what else is good :
 Then if you please those raptures high to touch,
 Whereof you boast so much ;
 And but forbear your crown,
 Till the world puts it on :
 No doubt from all you may amazement draw,
 Since braver theme no PHOEBUS ever saw.

Besides FELTHAM, there was scarcely a wit of that day who had not some some fling at this King Log. We have seen in the business of FORD how many lampoons were levelled at him ; but nothing galled him more severely than SUCKLING'S *Session*

of *Poets*, in which this fashionable young, but neat, writer most successfully ridicules him for his presuming to be the pedagogue of his cotemporaries. The following distich will serve as a specimen of the pleasantry that runs throughout the whole of the strictures. He says BEN broke silence,

“ And told them plainly that he deserved the bays,

“ For that his were called works, while others were but plays.”

In this contest, JONSON deprecated his untoward fate; for the blows he received were followed up so successfully that he never produced any thing afterwards but the literary hue and cry was raised against him, and he was brought forward to receive critical justice.

The *Magnetic Lady*, his next play, scarcely made its appearance but the wits began to tear it to pieces like so many crows about a putrid carcase. Doctor GILL, master of St. PAUL's school, and BEN, pen in hand, had a pitched battle, in which the doctor, though a man of no genius, flogged his antagonist like a very schoolboy. In the dispute, as it always happens in these cases, the public at first interested themselves, but getting cool, the merit of the piece, for it had some, fell unnoticed in the general indifference.

A Tale of a Tub, the last piece written by JONSON, escaped criticism in great measure by its insignificance. Writers, however, were not wanting to charitably deplore that falling off evidently manifested in the humour of this piece, which exhibits nothing better than spirits drained to the very lees, and which DRYDEN calls the dotages of JONSON. Some charitable friend should by this time have admonished this debilitated wit to have lain down a weapon which he was no longer able to wield; but, perhaps, such counsel was wisely withheld, lest the adviser and the advised should have acted the scene of GIL BLAS and the Bishop*.

The various *Masques* written by JONSON, in some of which we find sound poetry and good imagery, were generally complimentary, and in number about thirty-four, some of which, however, were mere trifles, and others written solely for the amusement of the queen and her ladies, who performed in them. The subjects are generally political and servilely foisted in to keep him steady

* When MACKLIN performed MACBETH at the age of seventy-five, SHUTER was asked in the Green Room what he thought of it, to which this child of humour dryly answered, Sir, "The time has been that when the brains were out the man would die and there an end."

in his feat of laureat; and, as they were generally represented through the medium of superb decorations designed by INIGO JONES, they can be considered, taking them generally, as nothing more than a vehicle to set off his ingenuity.

Thus have we seen, in the works of JONSON, the prototype of the man. They were full of fancied pomp, weight, and dignity, affected justice, truth, and persuasion, disguised rancour, malice and envy, and real meanness, servility, and adulation. As a member of society he was haughty, rude, and overbearing; as a friend, mistrustful, treacherous, and unsafe; and, as a foe, dark, revengeful and dastardly.

He was one of those, who, having no virtue in themselves, hate virtue in others, for he never could bear to be upon terms with any but those whom he despised while he flattered, and who, sucked in the nutriment for their vanity through his prostituted pen.

Manly, open, candid communication with mankind he disdained. His repulsive mind could embrace nothing kind, nothing fair, nothing rational. Thus we see among all his connections he neither

deserved nor kept a single friend ; and, whether we mark him by his rank ingratitude to SHAKESPEAR, who fostered him and licked his bear-like genius into form, his poor and cowardly fears of DECKER, MARSTON, CHAPMAN, HEYWOOD, FORD, and the rest, his unprovoked insolence to Cardinal PERRON who shewed him so much civility in FRANCE, his artful intrigues against DANIEL, his unjust and wanton ridicule of INIGO JONES *, to whom he owed some of his best reputation, his insolent and undutiful slander of his sovereign who had loaded him with benefits, or by any other similar brand ; if these are a fair title to fame, an honourable insignia of renown, a legitimate claim on the gratitude of posterity ; if these exhibit a single construction of wise, great, good, or rare, let us quote his eulogium from his tomb and cry—O Rare BEN JONSON † !

* JONSON could not bear that INIGO JONES should receive his share of fame for the decorations which indeed constituted the principal beauty of the Masques, and, therefore, ridiculed him in his *Bartholomew Fair* under the appellation of Sir LANTHERN LEATHERHEAD.

† We are told that even the burying of JONSON in Westminster Abbey was obtained through a trick ; for, that conscious of his slight pretensions to notice from mankind after his decease, he exacted a promise before his death of a piece of ground twenty inches square, for his resting place. This done he ordered that his remains

should be placed upright in the hole made of that dimensions with a stone bearing the inscription, "O Rare BEN JONSON!" It is pretty evident that there is nothing of literal truth in this. It is every word of it however figurative truth, and admirably depicts the heart of a man who conscious of his own unworthiness, and attaching to his fellow creatures that meanness, rancour, and suspicion which he found in his own mind, endeavoured to wrest from posterity, by a miserable shift, that fame to which genius and worth denied him an honourable claim.

CHAP. VII.

SHAKESPEAR RESUMED.

WITH the same pleasure that men return from exercising the common business of life, to whatever object they consider as the reward of their toil, do I now shake off less interesting pursuits in this labour, to return to SHAKESPEAR; the remainder of whose works I shall examine, and notice such collateral circumstances relative to them as may best serve to shew the foundation of their claim to that immortal rank they hold in the records of posterity.

The first play, according to the accepted dates, that SHAKESPEAR produced, after the death of ELIZABETH, was *Measure for Measure*, in which there are many and various traits of those inimitable beauties that pervade the writings of this boast of literature. Nothing can be managed with more art and understanding than the conduct of the deputed

ANGELO, who, proud of his authority, overstrides that very power of which he himself incurs the penalty.

How beautiful is the scene where ISABELLA pleads for her brother. Can any thing go beyond this

ANG. Your brother is a forfeit of the law,
And you but waste your words.

ISAB. Alas! alas!
Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
And he that might the vantage best have taken
Found out the remedy.

And again

Oh it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.

ANGELO's soliloquy, in which he deplores that he is caught in the same snare of the man whom he had condemned to die, is admirable and shews with what judgment the Duke pitches upon this weak, irresolute, and fallible character, to rouse the sleeping laws of VIENNA, while he himself stands by to prevent any serious mischief; shewing that when he shall come to exercise those laws himself, how many strong motives will cry out in favour of lenity.

ANGELO's second scene with ISABELLA, where he unmasks, under the idea that if she should refuse

him and even proclaim his infamy the sanctity of his character will shield him with the world from all disagreeable consequences, is again masterly.

The Duke's scene with CLAUDIO, in which is the celebrated speech on the insignificance of life, unmatched but in SHAKESPEAR, is remarkable for good conduct, especially as it gives the Duke an opportunity of listening to the conversation between ISABELLA and her brother, where she opens her heavenly mind in the language of angels, especially in her defiance of that weak and irresolute brother, for whom upon principles of honour she had pleaded. Where, but in SHAKESPEAR, shall we find such language as this?

Is't not a kind of incest to take life
From thine own sister's shame.

But this is a vein more agreeable than proper to indulge, for we must not here go into a dissertation on the beauties of SHAKESPEAR, I shall, therefore, consider this circumscribed privilege rather as a favour than a right, and use it as sparingly as possible; and, if I should sometimes catch myself at making too free with it I hope I shall be excused on account of the temptation.

Doctor JOHNSON, who has sometimes, though

not here, manifested sound sense in his judgment of SHAKESPEAR's plays, says that the serious language of *Measure for Measure* has more labour than elegance. If he looked in his own Dictionary for the etymology of elegance, which is there defined to be beauty without grandeur, he is right, for this language is sweetly beautiful and unaffectedly grand. The noble virtue, the true greatness, and the feminine honour of ISABELLA, are every where conveyed through sentiments of responsive eloquence, and the great and commanding justice of the Duke, who learns the temper of his subjects to govern them, and who chuses for a wife the most amiable of those subjects, are dressed in language no less consonant. This surely is grandeur of language, and, therefore, according to the Doctor, not elegance. I hope he was aware of the compliment this negative praise would pay SHAKESPEAR*.

He also says the plot is more intricate than

* To shew how little credit is to be attached to the *ipse dixit* of great characters, beauty is here, by the Doctor, applied to language, and in his Dictionary he applies it only to objects. Thus, to prove that there is no such thing as human infallibility, celebrated opinions are perpetually at variance with general acceptations. Thus do Lord Chancellors reverse their own decrees, and thus does even doctor JOHNSON contradict his own authority, being in this instance, if we quote himself, wrong in the application of two common words.

artful. This is surely a contradiction in terms. Can there be intricacy without art, and is not a dramatic poet's best art to keep his plot intricate? But these are the criticisms of those who deal in epithets who weigh instead of feel, and who, in a fancied consideration of what they are unequal to themselves, set up an imaginary standard of excellence for men whose genius is superior to their comprehension.

The plot of *Measure for Measure* is admirable both as a public and a private moral. The language is beautiful in the serious parts, and easy and full of vicacity in the comic. The characters are perfectly natural and well constructed; and, were the unity of time correctly observed, a matter however, in the present case, of no moment, it would be at all points a complete dramatic production.

Cymbeline, performed in 1604. Against this wonderful production has the pen of doctor JOHNSON blurted out a most unqualified and thoughtless denunciation. His words are: "To remark
" the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of
" the different times, and the impossibility of the
" events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults

“ too evident for detection, and too gross for
“ aggravation.”

How much easier it is to say this, than to defend it; and how much more do these four, hasty, envious strictures speak the snarling cynic than the candid critic. Suppose every word of this charitable declaration to be truth, ought a man to be tried only by his faults? Will doctor JOHNSON submit to this ordeal? Are there no beauties in *Cymbeline*? Did not doctor JOHNSON know that when GARRICK performed POSTHUMUS, and for some years afterwards, particularly when POWELL came forward, that it was the delight of the public? And will SAMUEL JOHNSON so far imitate his exemplar BEN as to say the public are a set of stupid idiots because they do not admit the infallibility of his *ipse dixit*? But let us see if the facts to which these assertions relate will bear the doctor out.

The characteristic of that fiction which serves the best purposes of morality, which teaches suffering innocence to wait patiently its recompence, which punishes vice and rewards virtue, is not “ folly;” that conduct by which these ends are accomplished is not “ absurdity;” those events on which that conduct is founded are not “ impossibilities,” therefore

so far the Doctor is unsupported by truth. Nothing can be more moral, more interesting, more possible than the plot of *Cymbeline*.

If the punishment of the presumptuous IACHIMO, the fool CLOTEN, and the wicked stepmother Queen, the reward of the sweetly enduring IMOGEN, and the generously mistaken POSTHUMUS, the restoration of the disguised Princes to their father, who had been deceived and misled, and the kingdom to peace and to happiness, is not moral and truly those very circumstances which constitute the best purposes of the drama, what is?

Such events as these may be conducted by means too intricate, and I am the first to confess that these are the faults of this play; but to say that they are so "gross," so unpardonable, as we are taught by doctor JOHNSON to believe, and that *Cymbeline* is therefore a mass of "unresisting imbecility," would be to write a libel upon the whole kingdom; many of whom have the story, bad as it is, rivetted in their memories, and can repeat numberless of the most beautiful passages in it by heart. Even VOLTAIRE is obliged to allow this; why will not doctor JOHNSON?

The story of *Cymbeline* is uncommonly dra-

matic, and after all the cavilling in the world the utmost that can be said about it is, that, though the play has but one plot, it has several episodes. The outline of the plot, however, is perfectly simple, and attempts at no more than, what SHAKESPEAR has accomplished in his *Measure for Measure* and other plays, the restoration of private happiness and public tranquility.

The tree it must be granted has many branches and yet it is extremely difficult to know where to lop, lest not only deformity should succeed symmetry, but that some vital part should be wounded; pruning therefore was all that could be found practicable, and this was so well done by GARRICK, in a consultation of his friends, that I believe it would be a difficulty to find a play on the stage that now, as well as at the time doctor JOHNSON saw it, could be entitled to a greater degree of reputation *.

* Lest I should unequivocally commit myself as one of those Englishmen who, according to VOLTAIRE, can admire nothing but processions, boxing, and bull-baiting, and who in particular, on the stage, are for daggers, skulls, ghosts, and other objects of horror, or they sleep, I beg leave to say that though I may have pleasure now and then in baiting a bear, or chastising a monkey, I am an inveterate enemy to all auxiliary helps, and think the stage polluted by such monstrous and unnecessary introductions; and I have no objection to say that I am so fond of real dignity and simple greatness that, were it not in places unnecessarily tame, I should consider *Zara* as a per-

The *London Prodigal*, performed in 1605. As this play has with one voice been voted not to have been written by SHAKESPEAR, my *ipse dixit* could be of little consequence were I to give a contrary opinion which, however, no man can do who takes the trouble to peruse it.

It has been remarked that two things are extraordinary relative to this play ; one, that it should be publicly acted at SHAKESPEAR'S own theatre with his name affixed to it, and the other, that he should be so negligent of his fame as to suffer such an imputation to pass unnoticed. The first, if true, would be extraordinary enough ; but there is no material proof of its truth and, against mere report, which I have frequently shewn has been seldom upon these occasions to be relied on, we have the positive evidence of our senses that it would be impossible for SHAKESPEAR to have admitted of a

fect model for correct tragedy ; but is this a reason that because there are subjects in their nature complex they are entirely to be thrust from the stage ? On the contrary if plots are not inexplicable, where grandeur is intended, no matter how much the author goes for an expansion of the mind ; and this is not a proof that the phlegmatic tempers of the English require to be roused by affecting objects, but that their minds are capacious enough to admit whatever is interesting and grand, instead of being satisfied with vapidty and refinement.

spurious piece that would either risk or assist his reputation, the splendor of his talents, and the rectitude of his conduct giving the lie completely to such a supposition; and for the last, if it was only imagined by the world in general to have been written by SHAKESPEAR it would have been an impeachment of those talents and that rectitude, had he for a single moment thought it worth his while to refute the calumny.

King Lear, produced in 1608. To dwell upon beauties that all the world knows and feels is neither novel, nor necessary. As it is, however, impossible to withhold one's admiration of any thing singularly meritorious we are not only entitled to pardon but thanks for endeavouring, by fresh observation, to revive a subject that has given and will for ever give universal delight.

Upon this principal, if we only bring to public recollection those beauties in this astonishing play, on which they have so often dwelt, and with so much pleasure, offering the same prospects yet altering the lights and the shadows, the merit of the subject may recommend the portrait to notice.

In *King Lear* the three grand ends of tragedy are completely effected. Pity, terror, and delight, have

an equal share of this admirable composition and sometimes one, sometimes another, and often all of these passions are excited, in a manner masterly even to astonishment.

Can pity be more beautifully awakened than in the sufferings of the loyal and venerable GLOSTER, the miseries unnaturally inflicted on the tender, credulous, choleric, but noble LEAR, or the unavailing filial piety of the angelic CORDELIA? Can terror be more tremendously roused than by the wickedness of GONERIL and REGAN, or the blind adoption of EDMUND by GLOSTER? Can delight be more legitimately gratified than by the conquest of struggling virtue over inordinate vice?

If these passions are called forth with all this vehemence, with all this art, and with all this truth, how much must we admire the judgment with which they are applied. It is not in tragedy who dies, but who dies lamented, and who execrated. Here are a knot of virtue's best votaries, of honour's truest advocates; they live to behold the discomfiture of their enemies, but it is then too late to repair that ruin of which their imprudence had been the cause. On the other hand the infamous set who

had dared to put nature, honour, and decency at defiance, fall execrated even by one another.

LEAR, in mind an angel, in temper a man, hopes, by exercising an act of unparalleled generosity, to be thanked and admired by all the world; and in particular by those on whom he has conferred this extraordinary benefit. He finds himself disappointed at setting out by the obstinacy of that daughter whom most he loved, and from whom he expected the most unequivocal obedience. He is naturally choleric, and, from that moment to the end of his life, meeting with nothing but contradiction and provocation, which is wound up to a paroxysm at losing *CORDELIA*, whose duty he had just recognized, and who comes to deliver him from his enemies, life becomes a torment, and his death is inevitable, and conveys in a most solemn moral, how much mischief may be caused by one single act of imprudence. *GLOSTER* is in the same predicament.

The rapidity, yet the collectedness, with which the mind accompanies the author from one situation to another is resistless, and the conduct of the action is so correct and spirited that it does not sink for a single moment. As for the discrimination, the single circumstance of the distinction between the

feigned madness of EDGAR and the real madness of LEAR, is enough to stamp the judgment of the poet with superlative reputation.

But what pen shall do justice to the language? None but his own; nor can any thing but quotations from SHAKESPEAR ever illustrate him. When LEAR corrects his hastiness, and flatters himself that CORNWALL'S reason for not seeing him is indisposition, not arrogance, how charming are these lines.

may be, he is not well;
Infirmity doth still neglect all office,
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves,
When nature being oppressed, commands the mind
To suffer with the body.

The epithet "commands" is exquisite. How greatly majestic is the language of LEAR in the storm? How grand are the first six words?

Blow winds, and crack your cheeks!

The image conveyed in calling the flashes of lightening, in the same speech,

vant-couriers to oak-rending thunderbolts

is greatly poetic. The next speech in which he deprecates the elements, yet accuses them with joining with his daughters against a head so old,

and white as his, is fascinating as well as the beautiful transition

No, I will be the pattern of all patience,
I will say nothing.

Further on, where he dares the guilty to face the storm and bear the admonitions of their own gnawing consciences, is another happy and bold object in the groupe, which again changes most felicitously to a consciousness of his own rectitude, in the words

I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

As the reflections are more and more en-
duced by the objects of horror that surround him,
they become more and more poignant, noble, and
profound. What for simplicity, for truth, for
grandeur, and for conviction can exceed this?

Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand,
For lifting food to it?

And then how melting is the following exclamation;

In such a night
To shut me out!

afterwards, upon the approach of another miserable

object, in EDGAR, how natural and affecting is the question,

What have his daughters brought him to this pass?

and upon KENT's saying he has no daughters,

Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.

What wonderful flights has this happy author hit off on the madness of LEAR, what variety and wild truth is there in that speech with which he breaks in, upon GLOSTER's saying

Is't not the king?

LEAR. Ay every inch a king:

When I do stare see how my subjects tremble.

Having heated his ideas in the rest of his speech against adultery, the transition

Give me an ounce of civit, good apothecary,
To sweeten my imagination

is wonderfully happy. After this says GLOSTER,

Oh let me Kiss that hand!

LEAR. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

These are a very few of the beauties of *Lear*; a play that might erect a monument of fame, not only for the author himself, but for the country in which he wrote. In short the faults of this play

are trivial, the merits are magnificent; and the fair judgment on it may be reduced to this. It is as it stands equal to any thing for the closet, for even the fool, though he retards the action, is full of exquisite wit, and with a very few judicious alterations it would make a most complete tragedy for the stage. The piece, however, is certainly injured by the admitted alteration by TATE, because it takes away from the grandeur of the original plot and the justice of the catastrophe. COLMAN brought out at Covent Garden a better alteration, but the idea of seeing the play end happily, which is from the purpose of tragedy, has now obtained, and, TATE having the voice of the public in his favour, it is very unlikely that any other alteration will be attempted.

Macbeth, brought forward in 1606. When we look at the many, the extraordinary, the exquisite beauties of *Lear*, it is something more than wonderful that on the following year SHAKESPEAR could produce *Macbeth*, a tragedy so well invented, so greatly conducted, and so inimitably written. *Lear* unites many interests, and interests many passions; *Macbeth* illustrates one passion alone, from which many interests issue; and in this it is superior to *Lear*, because the single moral enforced is never absent from the mind.

Where shall we find ambition, its terrible and destructive consequences, and its dreadful and headlong downfall so vividly described? Here, indeed, is terror laudably and strongly excited. 'Tis little to say that there is nothing in literature equal to it. We have seen monsters in nature, going from one ferocity to another, deface countries, depopulate nations, and stand like insatiate tygers grinning over their trembling prey; but it was reserved for SHAKESPEAR to mould a man who had bought "golden opinions of the world" into a monster, and gradually plunge him into such iniquity that his example one should think would banish ambition from the world for ever.

Thus the principal character in the picture is constantly held up to you, always in a different attitude, and each attitude more terrific than that which went before it. When MACBETH returned from the field, where he had gloriously justified his sovereign and preserved his country, his mind was occupied with reflections too noble to have hailed the honours that were thickening about him, otherwise than by their fair and legitimate title; nor, till the Devil, in the shape of the weird sisters, tempted him to his ruin, and inspired his wife to forward their infernal purpose, did he in the smallest degree shrink from his fealty.

How beautifully manifest is this in his conflicts with himself. He is first timid, then wavering, then determined, then guilty; and, what is masterly, even to wonder, he neither sees his actual danger, nor questions the ambiguity of his tempters, till he has achieved the end of his ambition. Thus he hurries from desperation to desperation; yet, still retaining some faint colour of his original nature through his numerous and sanguinary villanies, he deploras his wickedness with philosophy, and holds his courage to the last.

As to keep up the constant excitement of terror and to warn the spectator into virtue, is the great object of this tragedy, so the means to attain that object are as astonishingly pursued as they are various and material. The prophecy of the witches on the barren heath, the temptation of lady MACBETH, the appearance of BANQUO's ghost, lady MACBETH's confessing her crimes in her sleep, the deception of the witches in the cavern, which opens his mind to the folly of his trusting the Devil that had deceived him, are the steps that gradually lead to that height of despair from which he can neither advance nor retreat; and the few grains of pity at his fall, which are mixed with universal execration, make the example more terrible, for they remind us that this fiend was a human creature.

As to the language of *MACBETH* take it for nature, for truth, for grandeur, for pathos, or indeed for any other particular excellence, to read it is to rivet the attention, and to taste it to compliment the understanding. It would take a volume to describe its beauties, and when the willing task were performed it would be as vain and as useless as to describe daylight.

The imputed fault of this play is that its author has called in supernatural agents; but, though there are some writers that had better avoid this, I believe all readers of taste will pardon it in *SHAKESPEAR*. Certainly credulity might have been played on through the medium of dreams, and various other means; but *SHAKESPEAR* has in *Macbeth* given us a Scottish story, and, therefore, introduced us to people who had a strong belief in witches, second sight, and who indulged themselves in other superstitious whims; besides to warn the weak and credulous against illusive predictions was here most laudable, and this even doctor *JOHNSON* defends, who says *SHAKESPEAR* was right to do this, though some parts of this expedient may now seem improbable *.

* This is not the only place where the Doctor has inclined to-

But let me be forgiven for indulging myself in a few quotations. I shall not follow any chain but take them at random. **MACBETH** thus argues with himself.

He's here in double trust
First as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides this **DUNCAN**
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so
Clear in his great office, that his virtues will
Plead like angels, trumpet tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking off.

This hesitation induces lady **MACBETH** to fortify his mind with most diabolical firmness. She reminds him of his oath, and says,

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked the nipple from its boneless gums
And dashed the brain's out, had I but so sworn!

How wonderfully admirable is the epithet in the

wards a belief of the real existence of supernatural beings and their influence over mankind. In his *Prince of Abyssinia*, and his *Tour to the Hebrides*, it is pretty manifest; and, indeed, however he may in different places have abused admissible and sometimes beautiful passages in **SHAKESPEARE**, he has generally forgiven his flights to fairy land, and those truly happy creations which though in doctrine they inculcate illusion in writing please and astonish the fancy.

second line, "the babe that *milks* me." Nor must we forget the speech of lady MACBETH in which are these words,

look like the innocent flower
But be the serpent under it.

After he has committed the murder how awfully beautiful are these words,

Methought I heard a voice cry, sleep no more !
MACBETH does murder sleep, the innocent sleep ;
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, fore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

When MACBETH reflects how much more happy are the murdered innocent than the living murderer, he says,

better be with the dead
Whom we, to gain their place, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless extacy. DUNCAN is in his grave ;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well ;
Treason has done its worst : nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further.

In the fifth act, when MACBETH, driven to the toil and hopeless, begins to feel the approaches of despair, and looks every where in vain for a resource, he deploras his mispent life in these words :

my May of life
 Is fallen into the fear, the yellow leaf :
 And that which should accompany old age,
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
 I must look to have.

And afterwards to the doctor,

Canst thou minister to a mind diseased ;
 Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ;
 Raze out the written troubles of the brain
 And with some sweet oblivious antidote
 Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
 That weighs upon the heart ?

Then this reflection when the queen is dead.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time ;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
 Life's but a walking shadow ; a poor player,
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more : It is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.

Upon his hearing of the approach of Birnan for-
 rest he utters in despair

If thou speak'st false,
 Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive
 Till famine cling thee. if thy speech be sooth,

I care not if thou dost for me as much,
I pull in resolution ; and begin
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend
That lied like truth.

I shall here restrain my pleasure, and leave these passages from *MACBETH* warm with the reader, to speak its commendation.

After so much violent exercise of the mind, no wonder *SHAKESPEAR* should, in his next production, feel himself inclined to treat a comic subject. The *Taming of the Shrew* came out the same year as *Macbeth*, on which comedy I shall have the less to say, having already described its merits when I spoke of it in opposition to *FLETCHER*'s play of the *Woman's Prize*. It has great merit, as the world can witness for me, but its grand fault is that there are in it two plots instead of a plot and an episode, and therefore the whole play never had brilliant success. The comedy, however, which we know under the title of *Catherine and Petruchio*, and which is an alteration by *GARRICK* from *SHAKESPEAR*, is perfect in all its parts, and will no doubt be constantly a favourite with the public as long as true humour is considered as a requisite in comedy.

Of *Julius Cæsar*, which play *SHAKESPEAR* produced the following year, the critics have com-

plained because that warrior's death did not make up the catastrophe of the piece. Had this been the case, however, the author must have used in every respect different materials, and have wrought his piece upon an entirely different plan; for it was not his intention merely to shew the workings of the conspiracy, till its meditated consummation and there leave it, but to display the consequences of that assassination.

As these, however, are fairly wrought up, and productive of great interest and variety, I believe there are few who regret that SHAKESPEAR took this course. For one thing it would have been a pity to have lost the speeches of BRUTUS and ANTONY over the body of CÆSAR, which contain perhaps, some of the most sterling oratory to be found in any language, not excepting the contention of AJAX and ULYSSES for the armour of ACHILLES.

It must be confessed the unities are all broken, and there is much extraneous matter brought into the piece, but the inimitable beauties that so thickly pervade it spring out of these circumstances, nor do we so much incline to cavil at this incongruity, since we see through it treason discomfited, and the death of CÆSAR revenged.

But if, upon the whole, the features of this tragedy are more massed than shaped, we are greatly recompensed by peculiar beauties, however extraneous. The scene of BRUTUS and PORTIA, though it comes to nothing, is very fine; so is that of CÆSAR and CALPHURNIA; and, perhaps, there never was a grander picture of the infirmity of human nature than the quarrel and reconciliation of BRUTUS and CASSIUS. The very ghost of CÆSAR is awful in the extreme; and, so intimidates the army of the conspirators, that it may properly be said CÆSAR is his own avenger.

Upon the whole, consider this play as a regular tragedy, it is faulty in many points, consider it as historical it is supportable; but, consider it as an effort of genius, and it is incomparable.

A Yorkshire Tragedy, produced in 1608; is by some attributed to SHAKESPEAR; as however all his commentators, except Mr. STEEVENS, have agreed to reject it, to avoid unnecessary cavil, we will agree so far with them as to say that it seems to stand in a predicament something between *Pericles*, and *Lochrine*; for though there are evidently many images which appear to have emanated from the mind of SHAKESPEAR, those passages seem rather

to have been written for the assistance of another than that the whole belonged to himself. Let the belief, however, rest either way, the merit of it cannot assist any more than the imperfections of it can diminish his reputation.

Anthony and Cleopatra was performed 1608. This play from which was formed the materials for DRYDEN'S *All for Love*, a tragedy of most inimitable beauty, in many instances however transcends it, and would never probably have been touched by that exquisite poet, had not the unities been so ill pursued in SHAKESPEAR that the mind cannot accommodate itself to such a stretch of probability.

SHAKESPEAR'S play takes in part of the life of FULVIA, her death, ANTHONY'S return to ROME, his marriage with OCTAVIA, his return to CLEOPATRA, the battle of ACTIUM, ANTHONY'S death, and CLEOPATRA'S captivity and death; and, if the question had been for an author to have wrought interest out of complexity, SHAKESPEAR has greatly accomplished this end; for, in the words of doctor JONSON, "the continual hurry of the action, the
" variety of incidents, and the quick succession of
" one personage to another call the mind forward
" without intermission from the first act to the last."

It must, however, be confessed this interest is more extraneous than collected, or rather there are a number of broken interests which spring more from novelty than reflection; thus, though there are many great and admirable particular beauties, the conduct is disjointed, and the pleasure we receive it distracted by perpetual interruption.

The characters of the piece are well drawn. You see in ANTONY, in ROME, the same artful orator that stirred the Romans against the assassins of CÆSAR, and, in EGYPT, the fond, the doating, the credulous lover that lost his world by gazing. The imbecility of LEPIDUS, is as powerfully drawn, and so is the cunning of OCTAVIUS CÆSAR, who deposes LEPIDUS at pleasure, and makes the injuries of his sister a pretence to destroy his more noble but infatuated rival.

CLEOPATRA is drawn in a yet more masterly style; and, lest we should fail to lose her enticing image for a moment, the description of ANTONY'S meeting her upon the river CYDNOS, speaks a history of her and all such voluptuous syrens. The burnished gold that burnt on the water, the flutes that kept time to the oars, the purple sails, the silk tackling, she reclining in her pavillion, the boys like

smiling Cupids fanning her, her nymphs like Nereides, the incense that perfumed the air, all combine to conquer the conqueror ANTONY.

This is her first stroke of art. Afterwards by how many matchless graces does she enslave him; and, unfortunately every way for ANTONY, his first wife was ugly, and his second he married merely to patch up a truce with OCTAVIUS CÆSAR; who, afterwards consolidated the empire in himself, and acquired the title of AUGUSTUS by working on the different weaknesses of ANTONY and LEPIDUS.

The whole of CLEOPATRA's conduct is consistently worked up; the same ingredients are every where infused; and ardent love, quick jealousy, unconquerable pride, conscious dignity, and conscious levity, are evident in every look, word, and motion, and therefore her language is made to consist of rapture, reproach, haughtiness, eloquence, and blandishment. This portrait of her we receive at the hands of SHAKESPEAR; and, whether we see her parting from ANTONY, studying to endure his absence, receiving the news of his second marriage, greeting him on his return, provoking him to fight by sea at ACTIUM, consoling him on his defeat, playing him false with CÆSAR's ambassador, luring him into security, helping him on with his armour,

congratulating him on his victory by land, enduring his death, resolving her own; each scene, each speech, has a share of these and other corresponding qualities.

There are some admirable subordinate points most nobly introduced; among these are CÆSAR'S cool reception of those friends who have fallen off from ANTONY, the apostacy and compunction of ENOBARBUS, and that exquisite trait of honour in POMPEY; who, when he is persuaded by MENAS aboard the galley, to dispose of ANTONY, CÆSAR, and LEPIDUS, and be conqueror of the world, greatly rejects the offer, because they are his guests, in these words :

All this those should't have done
And not have spoke of it! In me 'tis villany,
In thee it had been good service,

But those who would know the admirable and various beauties of this greatly meritorious production must read it, and it will then be found that, whatever general faults it may have in its component parts as one piece, it has particular excellence enough to furnish materials for the whole reputation of any reasonable author.

Coriolanus performed in 1609. Men of extra-

ordinary genius chuse sometimes unproductive subjects to work upon, in order to shew with what art and management they can conquer the most irreconcilable difficulties. To reduce the history of *CORIOLANUS* into a play was one of those labours, which our dramatic Hercules has atchieved in a most wonderful manner; but after all, the labour is scarcely worth the pains, for, except the singularly noble character of *CORIOLANUS*, there is nothing correctly great in the piece.

The high spirit of *VOLUMNIA* is neither greatness nor dignity; it is merely loftiness. She conceives herself a Spartan mother, and would sacrifice every thing to her son's honour, and she persuades him to debase himself by flattering the people to obtain the consulship; and when, upon nobly disdaining to follow such unworthy advice, he is banished that country which he had preserved, and driven by its ingratitude to take up arms against it, she once more tries her influence over him by which means a slavish peace is patched up for *ROME*, which terminates in the triumph of his enemies and the accomplishment of his death by the ungrateful *Volcians*, whom he had imprudently served.

Thus there is nothing effectual nor justifiable, taken upon poetic ground, in the catastrophe.

MENENIUS, with all his friendship and good nature, is set down where he was taken up, he neither does good nor harm. The tribunes, SICINIUS, and BRUTUS, who deserve more the Tarpeian death than CORIOLANUS does banishment, instead of being punished, live and are happy, and VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and her children exist to deplore the death of the son, the husband, and the father, and the folly of having intruded on him their officious, weak, and unavailing virtue.

If SHAKESPEAR had departed from history, this play with a very little trouble to him would have been complete even to perfection. Who does not see that, if the Volcians had bravely resisted the calumny of AUFIDIUS, punished him for his perfidy, and made the restoration of CORIOLANUS to his country the terms of a lasting and honourable peace, the catastrophe would have been correctly poetical, and that a most patriotic moral would have been inculcated.

As it is, however, one very strong lesson is enforced; that it is impossible to serve the ungrateful, and that the punishment of the wicked may be safely trusted to the hands of fate.

For the language; the beauties of SHAKES-

FEAR are always resplendant, and his diction always appropriate; which we shall constantly find in this play; whether we trace the mind of the truly noble CORIOLANUS, the fondly proud VOLMUNIA, the dastardly envious AUFIDIUS, the simply honest MENENIUS, or the rascally artful Tribunes, whose base minds never could forgive such taunts as these.

Your affections are

A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
Which would encrease his evil. He that depends
Upon your favours, swims with fins of lead
And hews down oak with rushes.

But I shall not have space for extracts, and must therefore refer the reader to the play.

We have next in *Timon of Athens*, which was brought out in 1610, a kind of *Coriolanus* of another species, as fortunately handled, and more happily conceived, because private and domestic virtue is more a subject for the heart than public and patriotic. The ingratitude of which CORIOLANUS has to complain is from his country, that of TIMON is from his friends; one subject therefore is grand, the other pathetic, one great, the other interesting.

It is on this account that *Timon of Athens* arrests the attention to a degree of fascination, and yet

TIMON is not so much pitied as that ingratitude is deplored; for there is a degree of ostentation annexed to his character, and therefore his liberality has a species of prodigality in it, and his generosity is rather splendour than munificence.

All these shades of distinction SHAKESPEAR has most beautifully preserved, and, indeed, it seems every where to have been his darling study rather to warn men against imprudence, which may be avoided, or at least remedied, than the vices issuing from it, which when once committed are hopeless and without remedy.

TIMON gives; but we hear nothing of his relieving the distresses of honest poverty, necessitous virtue, or unrewarded merit, and, therefore, he is not munificent; he is vulnerable to flattery and pays the price of it, he gives to those who have enough already, he lavishes till his coffers are empty, and his lands mortgaged to pamper those he knows to be undeserving; this is not munificence.

But this is not all. He is aware of the ruin he seeks, he falls by choice; nor is it necessary, his follies are so glaring, so palpable, so known to himself, that his amiable and friendly steward should

persuade him, or the blunt APEMANTUS rail him out of his imprudence.

This, however, does not palliate the infamy of their ingratitude who, pampered and enriched by his bounty, desert him in his distress. The stamp of their apostacy, of their villany, of their meanness is indelible. They are, as TIMON himself styles them, “ courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears, “ trencher friends, time’s flies, cap and knee slaves, “ vapours and minute jacks.”

Thus all the punishments and rewards are equitable. TIMON suffers for his imprudence; he is ruined by prodigality and folly, and requited by vexation and disappointment. The Athenians are scourged and are sunk into shame and remorse at the recollection of their ingratitude to TIMON, and ALCIBIADES, the destruction of whose mutual enemies is insisted on, as the guarantee of peace with ATHENS. Nay even their own gold, which they had penuriously hid, is made the instrument of their chastisement at the very hands of those they had wronged, for it is found by TIMON, and applied to encourage the army of ALCIBIADES.

The warmth and spirit of the language, in many

places, has no parallel even in SHAKESPEAR; but its great beauty is its consistency. TIMON, always in extremes, execrates the whole human race for ingratitude he has experienced only from the Athenians, while APEMANTUS, constitutionally a misanthrope, makes no distinction between TIMON in prosperity or adversity, but rails at his folly in both situations, and tells him rude but honest truths.

When TIMON, in the first act, tells him he is proud, he says he is proud of nothing so much as that he is not like TIMON. When he asks him to dine; no, says he, "I eat not Lords!" and afterwards to the poet, speaking of TIMON, "He is
" worthy of thee and to pay thee for thy labour;
" he that loves to be flattered is worthy of the
" flatterer." He says to TIMON at the dinner:

I scorn thy meat; 'twould choke me for I should
Ne'er flatter thee.

and then, for proof of his sincerity, he thus apostrophizes.

O you Gods what a number
Of men eat TIMON and he fees them not!
It grieves me to see so many dip their meat
In one man's blood; and all the madness is
He cheers them up too.

When he meets TIMON in the woods, how severely, but how truly does he rate him.

This is, in thee, a nature but affected ;
A poor unmanly melancholy, sprung
From change of fortune. Why this spade ? this place ?
This slave-like habit, and those looks of care ?
Thy flatterers yet wear silk, drink wine, lie soft,
Hug their diseased perfumes, and have forgot
That ever TIMON was.

The language of TIMON is all blandishment in prosperity, all execration in adversity, and SHAKESPEAR has done well in making APEMANTUS say to him, " The middle of humanity thou never
" knewest."

At the banquet, while his own heart is open and he strives in bounty to outdo friendship, he says to those, who, as APEMANTUS properly remarks, are eating him up, " I have told more of you to myself
" than you can in modesty speak in your behalf,
" what need of friends if we should have no use
" for them ? They are the most needless things
" living, and would resemble sweet instruments,
" hung up in their cases, that keep their sounds to
" themselves."

In adversity, he is altogether ferocious, and pursue him from his denunciation of the Athenians,

ALC. Why me, TIMON?

TIM. That by killing of villains thou wast born
To conquer my country.—Here's gold, go on;
Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high viced city hang his poison
In the sick air.

The whole of this scene is wonderfully written.
Being left alone, he says as he resumes his digging:

That nature, being sick of man's unkindness
Should yet be hungry! Common mother, thou
Whose womb unmeasurable, and infinite breast,
Teems, and feeds all; whose self same mettle
Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puffed,
Engenders the black toad, the adder blue,
The gilded newt, and eyless venom'd worm,
With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven,
Whereon Hyperion's quickening fires doth shine;
Yield him who all thy human sons doth hate,
From out thy plenteous bosom, one poor root.

Numberless traits of this nature may be found
in this admirable piece of exquisite writing, with
one more of which I must content myself. When
TIMON, through the representation of his steward,
finds himself reduced to ruin, he exclaims, with
astonishment:

To LACEDEMON did my land extend.

To which he receives from the steward this affectionate reproof:

Oh my good Lord, the world is but a world;

Were it all yours, to give it in a breath,
How quickly were it gone ?

We come next to the best play upon the whole of SHAKESPEAR, and saying this it naturally follows that it is the best the world can produce. *Othello* was performed in 1611. Works of great merit, which carry with them the criterion of excellence, soar so far above praise that the ablest pens and the warmest inclinations are inadequate to do them justice, and even doctor JOHNSON has handsomely allowed, that "the beauties of this play impress themselves so strongly upon the reader that they draw no aid from critical illustration."

The more resplendant, however, great and astonishing objects are, and the admiration of them is diffused and general, the more do they extort from us involuntary praise. They are like our common salutations on the blessings of health and the beauty of the weather; which, though they are simple and self evident, are always eloquent, because they are sincere and heartfelt.

To describe the noble, vivid, and honest mind of the honourable and abused OTHELLO; violent in his love, slow in his suspicions, and terrible in his revenge, must be done invariably by every writer in the same language, for there cannot be

two ways of explaining what every body have agreed upon.

The subtle, fullen, studied villany of the cold blooded IAGO; insensible to honour, friendship, and gratitude; who laughs at conscience, spurns at generosity, and wounds virtue; and the sweetly innocent DESDEMONA; who, having in the choice of her husband given proof of boundless confidence and disinterestedness, and, therefore, cannot conceive the possibility in nature of her being suspected, are known and acknowledged for characters as critically natural, and as warmly interesting, as they are masterly drawn.

Even the subordinate characters are full of interest. The brave and generous CASSIO, who little suspects any ill effects from the confidence he unwarily places in an insidious villain, is made subservient to the malignant plot against OTHELLO's peace of mind; in which RODERIGO is the pliant tool that his credulity and vanity completely fit him for; nor is ÆMILIA without a considerable share of consequence in the groupe; for, without her, the infamous purposes of her diabolical husband would not be completed, nor his detection accomplished.

In short, for truth of character, knowledge of hu-

man nature, interest, gradually developed and greatly wrought up, that continually varies, occupies, and attracts, and that leaves the mind satisfied, and the judgment convinced, there never has been among all the critics worth notice more than one voice upon the subject of this play, and the utmost that has been advanced at all against it is the infraction of the unities, which it is agreed would have been sufficiently remedied if the scene had been laid in CYPRUS; for my own part, and I believe I am not singular in my opinion, as the scene of OTHELLO and DESDEMONA before the Senate contains interest and language which has been the delight and wonder of all hearers and readers, I am very well content that the unities in OTHELLO, broken as they are, should remain as we find them in SHAKESPEAR,

As for the language; I dare not trust myself with an examination of it for fear of getting into unwarrantable length. Those who wish to know and feel its merit must read the whole play, for there is scarcely a passage in it that has not some remarkable beauty, I shall however be excused, perhaps, for noticing a few of the most admired scenes.

The scene of the Senate, where OTHELLO delivers his round unvarnished tale, is for declamation

one of the finest things in the world, which might easily be proved by a comparison with the ancients, but that it would be too elaborate for my purpose. Those who wish to make the experiment will when the task is accomplished range on my side; and to go to the fountain head, for truth, for glow, for strength, for nature, they will not find a cause so pleaded throughout the whole *Iliad*, admirable as that poem is; and, this admitted, what a glorious thing it would have been for literature had SHAKESPEAR written an epic poem in blank verse!

SHAKESPEAR in this scene does not blink the question, he admits the strange improbability that

A maiden never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blushed at herself—
Should fall in love with what she feared to look on.

Thus it is not wonderful BRABANTIO should conceive that OTHELLO had practised witchcraft upon her; but, when with honest unaffected truth he has related that he won her by an artless tale of the danger he had past which she said “was pitiful, “was wonderous pitiful!” and the Duke instantly exclaims

I think this tale would win my daughter too,

With perfect good sense he utters these words :

If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head if my bad blame
Light on the man.

But when *DESDEMONA* in most unqualified terms confesses that she loves *OTHELLO*, that "her heart" "was subdued even to the very quality of her lord," that "she saw *OTHELLO*'s visage in his mind," and that "to his honours, and his valiant parts, she consecrated her soul, and fortune," no circumstance of objection remains.

This, however, is the foundation of what is to follow. Nothing can get over a degree of capriciousness in the conduct of *DESDEMONA*, for says *IAGO*, "what delight can she have to look upon the Devil," and it is impossible but a consciousness of a disparity between them must often occur to *OTHELLO*; who, though not "easily jealous," by "trifles light as air," that "are confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ," is at length "perplexed in the extreme." A prescience of all this *BRABANTIO* seems to have had, when he parts from them.

Look to her Moor; have a quick eye to see;
She has deceived her father, and may thee.

These words are spoken in the presence not only

of OTHELLO, but IAGO, who afterwards makes a notable use of them; and, though OTHELLO answers

My life upon her faith,

Yet that they sink into his mind, and remain latent there, till they come in contact and are called into action by IAGO's arts is evident; for, when IAGO remarks that in her not affecting "many
" proposed matches of her own clime, complexion
" and degree, whereto we see in all things nature
" tends, one may smell in such, a will most rank, foul
" disproportion, thoughts unnatural." OTHELLO after having struggled with his suspicions, exclaims, " Why did I marry ?" So that in this play SHAKESPEAR has again inculcated that grand lesson for human nature, to beware of imprudence.

Never was any thing managed with such art and nicety as the circumstances which create the jealousy of OTHELLO. SHAKESPEAR knew he had a noble mind to overthrow, and he has managed it by artful, gradual, and natural means. CASSIO is pitched upon by IAGO as the principal tool, to whom RODERIGO and ÆMILIA are subordinate.

CASSIO is noble, generous, brave, and handsome. He was privy to the loves of OTHELLO

and **DESDEMONA**, and has outstept **IAGO** in promotion. Who then so proper to be the instrument of his interest, his hatred, and his revenge? But this were not enough, if **RODERIGO** did not provoke him to quarrel, and **ÆMILIA** to steal the handkerchief. Upon these confirmed facts **IAGO** ventures to assert others; till at length the Moor, “perplexed in the extreme,” like “the base Judean throws a pearl away richer than all his tribe.”

When he sees **CASSIO** steal away from **DESDEMONA**, out of conscious shame for the fault that he was betrayed into by **IAGO**, the artful villain exclaims, “I like not that!” And this first rouses the suspicions of **OEHELLO**, who is unconsciously from that moment jealous; the quick progress of which passion he strongly feels in his notice that **IAGO** echoes him.

By heaven he echoes me !
 As if there was some monster in his thought
 Too hideous to be shewn. Thou did'st mean something :
 I heard thee say but now, thou lik'dst not that,
 When **CASSIO** left my wife ; what did'st not like ?
 And, when I told thee he was of my counsel
 In my whole course of wooing, thou cried'st, Indeed !
 And did'st contract and purse thy brow together,
 As if thou had'st shut up in thy brain
 Some horrible conceit.

How well, immediately afterwards, does the noble unsuspecting nature of OTHELLO burst forth as he describes unconsciously both what IAGO is, and what he thinks him :

I know thou art full of honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more ;
For such things, in a false disloyal knave,
Are tricks of custom.

IAGO takes this very hint ; and, lest he should be taken for such a knave, which knave he is though OTHELLO cannot suspect him to be so, he says, " Perhaps his thoughts are vile," that " he is vicious " in his guesses," and that " tis his nature's plague to " to spy into abuses," therefore says he,

It were not for your quiet, nor for your good,
Nor for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom,
To let you know my thoughts.

He next to shew how tenderly reputation ought to be handled exclaims,

Who steals my purse steals trash ; 'tis something, nothing ;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Wrapt up in his best securitys OTHELLO's good

opinion, he cautions him to beware of jealousy, and having at length set him upon the rack, appears, as if put to the torture himself, to be wrought upon by his friendship to a reluctant confession of what it was all along his aim to make OTHELLO draw from him. He then opens his pretended suspicions, hints his doubts of CASSIO, bids OTHELLO remember, quoting BRABANTIO'S words, that DESDEMONA had deceived her father, marrying him; and, when by these and other insidious arguments, he has shook the whole soul of the brave Moor, he most artfully utters with affected simplicity and compassion

I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

To which, his heart bursting, he answers, with constrained coolness,

Not a jot, not a jot,

The whole scene is wrought up in the same masterly manner, till IAGO has made such an inroad to OTHELLO'S heart that it is vulnerable everywhere, and trifles light as air corrode and burrow in it. The succession of circumstances, that gradually heighten the plot from this moment, are management itself. OTHELLO is confirmed in every thing but the truth. IAGO "is a fellow of exceeding honesty," and DESDEMONA'S to be "whistled

“ off and let down the wind to prey at fortune.”
She comes and he exclaims that “ if she be false
“ Heaven mocks itself! ”

Next he is on the rack and vents his fury
against IAGO who at least he thinks officious.

What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust?
I found not CASSIO's kisses on her lips;
He that is robbed, not knowing what is stolen,
Let him not know it, he's not robbed at all,

And again, in despair,

Oh now for ever
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
That make ambition virtue!

Then the transition from despair to extacy.

Villain be sure you prove my love a whore!
Make me to see it, or, at least to prove it,
That the probation bear no hinge, nor loop,
To hang a doubt on, or woe upon thy life.

In this paroxysm he rages higher and higher, till
IAGO, knowing his right cue, undertakes to give
him the proof he requires; and the dream, and the
disposition of the handkerchief, work him to such
a pitch that against CASSIO he exclaims

Oh that the slave had forty thousand lives!
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

This calls up an apostrophe to vengeance, and the conclusion is that IAGO undertakes the death of CASSIO, and OTHELLO goes apart to furnish himself

with some swift means of death
For the fair devil;

Previously, however, conferring on IAGO the first symptom of his reward by making him his lieutenant.

If we go on to the scene where OTHELLO taxes DESDEMONA with the loss of her handkerchief*, she perpetually reiterating the restoration

* This circumstance has been frequently attempted to be ridiculed; but no man, in sense or reason, can condemn it; for the use SHAKESPEAR has made of it is full of art and management. The business was apparently to make DESDEMONA give CASSIO some present, and the merit lay in its being a trifle, for any thing of more consequence would have brought on a serious refutation. There is an anecdote which has been told in support of those who are disposed to treat this circumstance lightly. Two Frenchmen were at Drury Lane to see BARRY in OTHELLO; and, when he spoke, in this scene with DESDEMONA, the following words, which he did most admirably,

There is magic in the web of it;
A fybil, that had numbered in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sewed the work;
The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk;

of CASSIO, and he demanding his present, which, he says, "was given to his mother by an Egyptian
 " who told her that, while she kept it, it would
 " make her amiable, and subdue her husband en-
 " tirely to her love, but that, if she lost it, or made
 " a gift of it, his eye should hold her loathly," we shall still see the same art and management. Again, in the next scene with IAGO, where he is wrought into a frenzy. After this comes the scene with LO-
 NOVICO when he reads the letter from VENICE, which calls him home and deposes CASSIO in his stead, a cunning stroke in the author, for it gives

And it was dyed in mummy, which the skillful
 Conferred of maidens' hearts.

One of the Frenchmen asked the other whether he could discover what had put the actor in such an extacy; the other, who just understood English enough to know the circumstance, but not to taste the application, replied "*Mais, mon Dieu, Monsieur, il a perdue son mouchoir.*" "*Ah, ha,*" said the other, with great gravity, "*ce'st bien Dommage.*" Upon spectators as ignorant of the drift of this admirable circumstance as these Frenchmen it might be thrown away; but, had they known for what purpose it was introduced, they would have been forward to have acknowledged its propriety for the happiest effects on the French theatre are all produced by trifles light as air. Taking it, however, at the best for these cavillers, their anecdote is of very little use in this case; for, had it meant nothing more than simply the losing the handkerchief, the exclamation might have still been strongly in point; for, as Frenchmen all take snuff, such a loss must naturally be considered by them as a serious misfortune.

DESDEMONA a fresh opportunity of soliciting their reconciliation. This he cannot bear. He struggles with the conflict, till, provoked beyond his reason, he strikes her. Her meekness, duty, and resignation, enrage him still more, and the speeches uttered in broken sentences where he is stung to death at her fancied infidelity, and CASSIO's real advancement, though at the same time he strives to keep down his lively feelings, leave him an object of astonishment to the characters, of pity to the spectators, and of horror to himself—says LO-
DOVICO

Is this the noble nature
Whom passion could not shake!

The next scene with DESDEMONA is greatly managed. He is now every way wrought up, and and it is impossible, though his interview is for the purpose of knowing the truth, that she can dress it in language to be believed. ÆMILIA has just said

If any wretch has put this in your head,
Let heaven requite him with the serpent's curse
For, if she be not honest, chaste, and true,
There's no man happy.

But 'tis too late. What answers OTHELLO to this?

She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd
That cannot say as much.

After this of what avail can be all the protestations of the poor unhappy, devoted creature, herself. It is this which makes the scene so warmly interesting. We know that it is not in rhetoric to move him, and that the more truth stares him in the face, the more the phantom that haunts him dresses it in the garb of falsehood, and yet we flatter ourselves that he will be undeceived.

Innocence, consciousness, and rectitude, weigh nothing. He deplores the falsehood he believes, and will not see the verity that solicits him. He is distracted at the ingenuous sweetness he fancies she puts on, and is confirmed in his rooted suspicions by the very courage with which she meets his unmerited ingratitude; his nature suffers, but a false pride tempts him to false justice, and nothing can now prevent her fate.

DESDEMONA's scene with ÆMILIA, and afterwards with the inexorable villain IAGO, are beautifully tender and irresistibly melting. Her sweet lamentations are exquisite. IAGO's hypocrisy is happy, and ÆMILIA's quick resentment in which SHAKESPEAR has most fortunately blended the amiable in the virago, is truly the ebullition of an honest, enraged, feminine heart.

She says that some eternal villain has devised the slander, to which IAGO replies,

If any such there be, heaven pardon him!

ÆMIL. A halter pardon him! and Hell gnaw his bones!

The Moor's abused by some villainous knave.

O, Heaven! that such companions thoud'st unfold;

And put in every honest hand a whip,

To lash the rascal naked through the world.

We are now ripe for the catastrophe, which, if it has any fault, is too shocking. DESDEMONA's ordering her wedding sheets to be put on the bed is mournfully moving, and the labouring of OTHELLO's swelling heart, while he meditates the murder, is awful to astonishment. "It is the cause
"my soul," I'll not shed her blood," "yet she
"must die," "put out the light," and the consequent remarks, upon these broken phrases are highly interesting.

DESDEMONA's waking, her inviting OTHELLO to bed, her gradual apprehensions, and at length her reading her fate in his eyes, which she says are fatal when they roll, are full of dread and terror. These sensations increase as her justification of herself induces her to call for CASSIO to undeceive him, for this brings to the recollection of OTHELLO the orders he had given IAGO.

DES. What is he dead?

Z Z Z

OTH. Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had stomach for them all.

DES. Alas he is betrayed, and I undone.

Nothing upon earth can breathe the language of an innocent and injured mind more than this last line, but how can the tortured soul of OTHELLO see this?

Out strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face?

Her fate is now inevitable; his rage is at its utmost, and the dreadful consequence follows.

In the next scene with EMILIA, which is requisite to the detection of IAGO, a strong interest is still kept up. The faithful creature, hurt to death at the scene before, is all heart; and when OTHELLO confesses that IAGO set him on, she exclaims

My husband say that she was false!

OTH. Thy husband honest, honest, IAGO.

ÆM. If he say so, may his pernicious soul

Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart;

She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

All the rhapsody that follows is equally warm, vivid, and forcible. The other characters are attracted by the alarm; the credulous Moor is undeceived, and the detested IAGO doomed to the torture. OTHELLO's death is but too necessary, and he falls admired, censured, and lamented; or in his own better words "an honourable murderer."

There are yet two plays of SHAKESPEAR to be examined, *The Tempest*, which appeared in 1612, and *Twelfth Night*, produced in 1614. The first is a fresh instance of the creative fancy of this incomparable writer, and the other a fair and most humorous description of natural manners.

Perhaps nothing can be superior to the great diversity, extensive variety, the opposition of intelligent to vulgar characters, aerial to earthly, the admirable judgment, the philosophic grandeur, and the strong justice that mark the *Tempest*, or the elegant nature, the true humour, the whimsical equivoque, the neat point, the irresistible pleasantry that characterize *Twelfth Night*.

In the *Tempest*, the noble revenge of PROSPERO, the fallen ambition of ALONZO and ANTONIO, and the union of FERDINAND and MIRANDA are strong circumstances, and as greatly treated as they are poetically conceived. The magic is of that kind which in SHAKESPEAR we are impelled to call natural, and the distinction between the sprite ARIEL, and the monster CALIBAN, could originate from no other mind. Upon the whole there is such a mixture of grandeur, pathos, nature, pleasantry, and interest; that, at the same time every curiosity is on tip toe, every wish is gratified.

As to the language; I could, with much pleasure, and without any difficulty, get myself into the same scrape as I did in the examination of *Othello*; but I must put a curb on my inclination; not, however, without noticing that from this play the critics have very judiciously selected the properest speech in the works of SHAKESPEAR, or, indeed, in the empire of letters, to serve for his epitaph*.

* As I wish as much that the errors of SHAKESPEAR, when they appear to be material, or have generally been considered so, should meet investigation, as to have his beauties, were it possible, enumerated, I think it highly necessary to notice here the censure that has been cast on his ignorance of nautical terms, as they are applied in this play, which censure has been played off as unsparingly as ignorantly. I agree that DRYDEN's sea terms are much more correct, and even more poetical than those of SHAKESPEAR, and whoever reads his *Annus Mirabilis* must acknowledge that he even exceeds in many places the celebrated poem of the *Shipwreck*, by FALCONER, not, however, without having run himself into quaintness; but navigation was a very different thing at the time of DRYDEN, and of SHAKESPEAR. In that interval we had been taught in great measure nautical tactics by the French, which again we had improved upon, and I very much question whether a young post captain made at this time, though in every respect an admirable seaman, would be able to describe in what manner sir WALTER RALEIGH manœuvred a fleet. If this be true it will be extremely difficult to detect inaccuracy in mere techenical words, which in every profession are perpetually varying. We are told that SHAKESPEAR talks of the master's whistle, although there is a boatswain aboard; but there is not so much impropriety in this upon examination, for as there are different grades in the army, from the ensign to the colonel, and the serjeant to the major, so there are in the navy, from

As for *Twelfth Night*; if, in the violent love of

the midshipman to the admiral, and the under mates of different descriptions to the master; and to prove the immediate connection between the master and the boatswain, the French have no other term for boatswain but *contre-maitre*. Thus the whistle is effectively the whistle of the master, since it is as much used by his command as the drum is by the command of the major when he takes out the battalion; and to which we may add that different nations have different modes. The vessel in question belonged to NAPLES, and tis known that there we find brigantines, schooners, xebecs, bilanders, galliots, and others that go in the catalogue for ships, and that they have different sails and consequently different officers. This apparent mistake, therefore, however it might shock the ears of a midshipman of the present day, might for ought we know to the contrary be both figuratively and literally right at the time of SHAKESPEAR, for the rest of his phrases, though not fashionable, are easily understood. "Take in the topfail" is a very good phrase, especially as the wind encreases, and it is a good preparation for "down with the topmast," which is the next word of command. He might to be sure have said which topfail, and which topmast, but this is mere cavil; for he says immediately afterwards, "bring her to try under maincourse." Now bring her to try, the situation being a storm, is an admirable phrase, and under maincourse means without doubt under the mainsail, for the lower sails are the courses; and, to prove that he not only is correct, but that he understood pretty well what was to be done with a vessel in such a situation, having set the mainsail after the topfail is lowered, the next command is "lay her a hold," which is what we understand now to be keep a good hold of the land; but instantly, upon finding this difficult, the orders are suddenly altered to "set the two courses, off to sea again, lay her off:" confirming the fourth speech in the play "Blow till thou burst thy wind if room enough," which by the way is a sailor's constant observation, and these two courses shew she was not a ship but some vessel of two masts. Immediately after this manœuvre, the mariners

ORSINO for OLIVIA, her sudden attachment to VIOLA, the marriage, under the likenesses she bears to her brother SEBASTIAN, and he to her, huddled up with more speed than prudence, and at last ORSINO's willingness to forego his former passion and wed VIOLA, we find more perplexity than art, more creation than nature; we are abundantly recompensed by some of the finest strokes of humour the stage has produced in the scenes between sir TOBY, sir ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK, and the rest.

The trick played by this set upon MALVOLIO is most happily comic; and, though perfectly natural, is so singularly whimsical, that SHAKESPEAR himself is constrained to make FABIAN say, "If this were
" played upon a stage now, I would condemn it as
" an impossible fiction."

The language of *Twelfth Night* is full of beauty

cry "All's lost," and the ship instantly sinks, and thus she is clearly broached to, or brought by the lee, the violence of the storm having rendered all their endeavours to save her impracticable; so that if SHAKESPEAR did not know how to sink a ship *secundem artem*, chance did a great deal for him in this regular and probable progress. Most of the cavil against SHAKESPEAR having arisen from his use of phrases which have become obsolete, and sea phrases being more likely than any others to become so in consequence of their perpetual corruption through an intercourse with all nations, let us good naturedly allow him a little judgment of this subject who knew so incomparably every other.

judgment, and maturity ; and we are taught by it to regret the prodigious literary treasure which would have been the further boast of this kingdom had SHAKESPEAR been blest with longer life, and continued to labour for the advantage and amusement of mankind. The speech, " She never told her love," &c. is in every body's mouth, and many other admirable passages are all well remembered.

With this play, which finished the brilliant career of SHAKESPEAR, I have brought up my account of that assemblage of dramatic talents that ornamented the reign of JAMES the first ; an era, notwithstanding all that has been said against it, which certainly has no parallel, and when we take in the consideration of the short time the theatre had emancipated from the rudest barbarism and arrived to a degree of perfection it never knew before throughout the world, and which I am afraid it will never know again ; and, also that this perfection was solely and entirely owing to SHAKESPEAR, the proud conclusion for the honour of this country is too decided to need an observation *.

* When I come to examine the wits of CHARLES the second, I shall fulfil an unwilling duty by shewing how unjustly SHAKESPEAR and his cotemporaries are aspersed to set off the dramatic writings of

In short, though there are many faults which attach to every writer of that time, these are faults magnified by a comparison with SHAKESPEAR's more resplendant abilities. More dramatic poets wrote then and their various perfections were more universally felt than since, but they were planets and their satelites, to which SHAKESPEAR was the sun. JONSON wrote for the learned, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER for the fashionable, MASSINGER for the elegant, but SHAKESPEAR wrote for all the world.

that time, when general poetry had certainly advanced into great reputation, but dramatic poetry had proportionably fallen off. DRYDEN, who in this instance lost sight of all candour and liberality, caluminated what he could not equal; for he was hardly ever great without rhyme, which, however it might have been agreeable to CHARLES the second, who was just arrived from FRANCE, and rapt up in CORNEILLE, and the rest, is not the language of nature; and this proves that it is one thing to be a poet, and another thing to be a dramatic poet.

CHAP. IX.

PLAYHOUSES AND ACTORS.

I HAVE shewn that about seventy plays were produced in the interval between 1589 and 1603. From that time to the death of JAMES the first, a period of twenty two years, there were probably about one hundred and ninety pieces brought out which were acknowledged by their authors, and about thirty, of which the authors were concealed, indeed we have accounts of a larger number but I think the remainder, amounting to about twenty-five, were performed between the death of JAMES and the commencement of the troubles of CHARLES the first,

We may, however, set down fairly that ten plays, on an average, besides two, or perhaps three masques, in a year, during that period, were presented to the public, and this induces us fully to believe that theatres multiplied very fast owing to the various contentions of so many authors; but it

is not, therefore, to be taken for granted that they had all regular companies, or that plays were acted in them all at one time; but rather that they were some of them subordinate to the rest, or that the companies of performers shifted about occasionally to them, as it might from various causes suit their convenience,

We hear of no regular licence, under the Privy Seal, to any person or set of persons except that granted in the first year of JAMES, to SHAKESPEAR, FLETCHER, BURBAGE, HEMMING, CONDEL, and others, and as this authorized them not only to exhibit plays at their usual house the Globe, on the Bank Side, but wherever else they thought proper, it is possible, for they were not then encumbered with scenes, that they might perform at different places for the better accommodation of those who lived in the vicinities of the respective theatres.

We know that SHAKESPEAR's company occupied the Globe and Blackfriers, and also a winter and summer house, at either of which when they performed they were called the King's Servants, so that here are four houses belonging to one concern. The company at the Phoenix in Drury Lane, were called the Queen's Servants, and the private theatre in Salisbury Court, were called the Prince's Servants,

but there is nothing that leads us to a knowledge of who the actors were that made up these two companies, whereas almost the whole of SHAKESPEAR'S company are not only known by name but we have already seen a good deal of their respective merits.

These six theatres, the Red Bull, in St. John's Street, and the Fortune, near White Cross Street, seem to have attracted the principal notice at the time of which we are speaking; the first being appropriated for the reception of genteel companies, and the latter for citizens and the inferior description of persons. It is possible the Curtain, and the Theatre, which had been built a great many years before, were at this time shut up, and what induces us to believe this is, that ALLEYN, when he became manager of the Fortune, was obliged to take it down and rebuild it; at which time he is said to have discovered that treasure with which he erected and endowed Dulwich Hospital.

This ridiculous report has been credited on no other ground than that it is not easy, in any rational way, to account for ALLEYN'S having amassed the very large riches he is said to have possessed, which had they amounted to no more than the eight hundred a year, the endowment of Dulwich, would have been at that time an immense fortune for a person

in his situation. He is said to have been an excellent actor, and to have been very successful; but who was at that time so successful as SHAKESPEAR? and yet he died in no state, though the world subscribes to his prudence, to keep his family above mediocrity, much less to build and endow an hospital.

ALLEYN's fortune no doubt proceeded partly from marrying three wives, each of whom brought a handsome portion, partly from the success of his theatre, partly from his being keeper of the king's wild beasts and master of the Royal Bear Garden, and partly from his being a most rigid and penurious economist, which character he so strictly enjoined himself that he was the first pensioner in his own charity; probably in imitation of RAHERE, who founded, as we have seen, St. Bartholomew's Priory, in which he became the first prior*.

* However ALLEYN procured his fortune, and whatever were his motive for building his hospital, he deserves for ever the thanks of his own fraternity for perpetuating a trait that reflects the highest honour on that profession which fools only have considered as dishonourable. His influence must have been very great; for he obtained liberty to endow his charity, notwithstanding the representation of the great Chancellor BACON, who wrote upon this occasion the following letter to the marquis of BUCKINGHAM.

“ I now write to give the king an account of a patent I have

The Fortune Theatre did very well but it was only frequented, as we have seen, by those who could afford to pay low prices; and, in other respects, could not be in such repute as those places over which SHAKESPEAR presided; for none of the plays in great estimation were brought out there but on the contrary they were all performed either at the Globe, or Blackfriars, or at the Phoenix, and as we hear very little of any of the other theatres by which we can describe their success and the nature

“ flayed at the seal: it is of licence to give in mortmain eight hundred pound land, though it be of tenure in chief, to ALLEN that was a player, for an hospital. I like well that ALLEN playeth the last act of his life so well; but if his majesty give away thus to amortize his tenures, his court of wards will decay; which I had well hoped should improve. But that which moved me chiefly, is that his majesty now lately did absolutely deny sir HENRY SAVILE for two hundred pounds, and sir EDWARD SANDYS for one hundred pounds, to the perpetuating of two lectures, the one in OXFORD, the other in CAMBRIDGE, foundations of singular honour to his majesty, and of which there is great want; whereas hospitals abound, and beggars abound never a whit the less. If his majesty do like to pass the book at all, yet if he would be pleased to abridge the eight hundred pounds to five hundred pounds, and then give way to the other two books for the university, it were a princely work; and I would make an humble suit to the king, and desire your lordship to join it, that it might be so.”

These reasons were certainly very cogent; but he received orders, nevertheless, to affix the great seal to the patent, and ALLEYN laid the first stone of his hospital on the thirteenth of September, 1619.

of their entertainments by any established criterion. I do not think it improbable, if they were not used occasionally by the established company, that they were either appropriated to the acting of plays for the amusement of noblemen who kept their respective actors, or else their amusements consisted like Sadler's Wells of something inferior to those of the regular theatres, especially as Masques were so much the fashion in those times.

This is, however, mere conjecture, and we have one proof, a strange one to be sure, that regular plays were acted at the Fortune at least; for we are solemnly told that ALLEYN "performing a
 " Dæmon with six others, in one of SHAKESPEAR'S
 " plays, was in the midst of the play surprized by
 " an apparition of the Devil; this so worked upon
 " his fancy that he made a vow which he per-
 " formed by building Dulwich Hospital *."

* There is something very curious in this anecdote. Why the Devil, who is not in general supposed to be a very charitable character, should be so anxious to frighten a man into building an hospital is not very easy to be understood. Why he should particularly pitch upon ALLEYN for this philanthropic purpose is altogether as extraordinary; but it is still more extraordinary that their devil should have so left them in the lurch as not to have suggested a more probable vehicle for the propagation of this fact; for throughout all the great and unbounded variety in the works of SHAKESPEAR there is not a single play in which we find seven dancing devils.

However all this may have been, ALLEYN seems to have challenged and received the highest respect from all ranks. He was indeed the Roscius of his time, for, says FULLER, "he was a youth of excellent capacity, a chearful temper, a tenacious memory, a sweet elocution, and, in his person, of a stately port and aspect."

FULLER however, with that vulgar contempt, and ignorant prejudice, with which the profession of an actor is too often treated, congratulates ALLEYN's father on having withheld from him a liberal education, which he thinks would only have fitted him for a more serious course of life. By which, if ALLEYN had the extraordinary talents we are taught to allow him, he without intention pays him a compliment, for it is sometimes better that nature should furnish an education than the schools; but if he would intimate that the instruction promulgated from the stage is so superficial and immaterial as to require only slender and uninformed talents, every man of liberal intelligence must hold his opinion in sovereign contempt.

HEYWOOD compares ALLEYN to Proteus for change, and to Roscius for eloquence. He is said to have performed originally the principal cha-

racters in SHAKESPEAR'S and JONSON'S plays; but we have never been told what those characters were, and indeed the fact does not seem to be confirmed, at least as to his having performed them originally, for not one of those plays came out at his theatre; and, as we have plenty of corroboration that BURBAGE was the original RICHARD the third, LOWIN the first HAMLET, and other facts of the same complexion, there is sufficient reason to believe that ALLEYN'S performance of SHAKESPEAR'S, and JONSON'S characters was at second hand. He was, however, greatly extolled, and there can be no doubt but his merit was very considerable, even though it is but fair to conceive that the talents of the actor might be magnified by being seen through the munificence of the man*.

* JONSON was the constant panegyrist of ALLEYN; and, what is very extraordinary, we have no instance upon record of his having quarrelled with him. The following epigram has been frequently quoted, where BEN, however, as may be seen by the two last lines, in his disinterestedness, seem to have introduced an Ironicism. All for you and a little for myself honey.

If ROME so great, and in her wisest age,
 Fear'd not to boast the glories of her stage,
 A skilful ROSCIUS and great ÆSOP, men,
 Yet crown'd with honours, as with riches then,
 Who had no less a trumpet to their name,
 Than CICERO, whose very breath was fame:
 How can so great example die in me,
 That, ALLEYN, I should pause to publish thee?

As it will shortly be very material to take up this subject again, and pursue it to the restoration, to which period, or very near it, most of the celebrated actors at the time of SHAKESPEAR lived, an account of whom will then make a very interesting feature in the theatrical history of this country, I shall for the present drop the stage itself to examine, in a summary manner, the state of those arts which are calculated to lend it collateral assistance.

Who, both their graces, in thyself hast more
Outstrip'd, than they did all who went before :
And present worth, in all dost so contract,
As others spake, but only thou dost act ;
Wear this renown: 'tis just that who did give
So many poets life, by one should live.

CHAP. X.

CLOSE OF JAMES THE FIRST.

THOUGH the arts, from the close of HENRY the eighth's reign, had been making a progress towards perfection; though every encouragement was given to genius and talents by ELIZABETH, and to the best possible purpose and effect, as we have seen; yet when the kingdom lost her energy in ruling, many pursuits of ingenuity relaxed.

JAMES, from principle and the prejudice of education, considered his right to rule as transmitted from heaven; and, under this abuse of the idea that the king can do no wrong, which is a beautiful fact taken in its right sense, he considered himself as infallible as a Pope, and thus throughout his whole reign there were constant struggles between the privileges of the people, and the prerogative of the king.

The Protestant religion having drawn aside that

veil of superstition in which mens minds had been entangled, and inveloped, the people began to think for themselves; and, though they were willing to allow every honour and respect due to the chief magistrate that had by legitimate right been permitted to rule over them, yet they scouted the idea of his being next to a sacred missionary, and heaven's vicegerent.

This was completely owing to the folly of their ruler. They never dreamt of this with ELIZABETH; their obedience to her, though insisted on, was neither exacted, nor enforced; it was necessary representation on her side, and wholesome compliance on the theirs. Thus her reign being conducted with equal wisdom and resolution, became admired and popular, and she was permitted to possess prerogative to its utmost stretch, because she was not so unwise as to let it trench on the priveleges of the people.

In this critical juncture, when it required in a soveraign strong determination on one side, and strict impartiality on the other, nothing could be so difficult as to reign in ENGLAND without great, strenuous, and decided talents. These JAMES unfortunately did not possess; he did not even know the character of the people whom he came to go-

vern; and, seeing this, they were determined to know themselves, and create their own resources.

This instantly cleft the kingdom in two, and privilege, and prerogative, which, like the right hand and the left were formed for the assistance of each other, became the signal of so much schism and disunion that there can be no doubt but every measure during this reign, in which was conceived the notorious gunpowder plot, in which the upright OVERBURY was poisoned, in which the gallant RALEIGH was unjustly executed, and in which the great BACON was cashiered for bribery, was some act of preparation for erecting the scaffold where the unfortunate CHARLES lost his head.

Every period, in which a kingdom is involved in disquiet and turbulence, is naturally unfavourable to the arts, and the monarch who neglects the fortunes of wise and noble counsellors, accustomed under his predecessors to deserve, by great and able conduct, the affection and countenance of their fellow subjects, will never be looked up to as the patron of the ingenious, and the enlightened.

JAMES selected his favourites from low situations. They were weak, ignorant, and illiterate, and possessed minds congenial to his own. These

men were employed to execute measures and conduct expeditions of which they were incapable. Such were ill calculated to encourage merit, and thus it happened that the rest of EUROPE, in general literature, and in many of the arts infinite outstript ENGLAND.

It cannot however be said that they laid more than dormant. Study was preparing them for that celebrity which patronage was afterwards to confirm. In the mean time general poetry waited for COWLEY and MILTON, and painting for RUBENS and VANDYKE; music and dramatic poetry were nevertheless in full reputation; and this was owing to the gallantry introduced at court by the king's favourites.

The court of JAMES was full of every species of dramatic recreation; an indulgence the people were willing enough to take advantage of; who, while JONSON, invading DANIEL's province, provided those superficial entertainments at court under the title of Masques, the principal merit of which was owing to the ingenuity of INIGO JONES, followed the more rational pursuits of receiving instruction and amusement from the labours of SHAKESPEAR, and those admirable poets whose merits we have already examined.

These masques, however, were particularly favourable to the cause of music, which, being thus unrestrained received, very fast, particular countenance and protection. The great CAMDEN, whose mandate the schools of every description were glad enough to obey, had from his infancy made music his favourite study, for he was originally a choirister at Magdalen College, OXFORD.

CAMDEN, thus partial to music, and determined to give it every advantage in his power made a resolution to revive a lectureship at OXFORD that had been founded by ALFRED. For this purpose he sent a musical friend, of the name of HEYTHOR, with the deed of endowment, for which he had obtained permission to doctor PIERS, who was then Vice Chancellor, and who was so pleased with the circumstance, as well as to have an opportunity of obliging CAMDEN, that he obtained the degree of Doctor in Music for HEYTHOR, and ORLANDO GIBBONS; who were both created by that title on the eighteenth of May, 1622*.

* The writers in general assert that GIBBONS never took the degree of Doctor in Music; but the following letter from doctor PIERS, the Vice Chancellor, to CAMDEN, will shew that they are completely mistaken.

“ Worthy Sir,

“ The university returns her humble thanks to you with this letter.

Besides these advantages, which music boasted from the consequence and the merit of its professors, it had every possible encouragement under the patronage of the great, and the protection of the king, whose children were all instructed in that art by the ablest masters. Prince CHARLES was a scholar of COPERARIO, of whom he learnt the viol da gambo*.

"We pray for your health and long life, that you may see the fruits
 "of your bounty. We have made Mr. HEYTHOR a doctor in music;
 "so that now he is no more master, but Doctor HEYTHOR; the like
 "honour for your sake we have conferred upon Mr. ORLANDO
 "GIBBONS, and made him a doctor too, to accompany Dr. HEY-
 "THOR. We have paid Mr. Dr. HEYTHOR's charges for his jour-
 "ney, and likewise have given him the OXFORD courtesie, a pair of
 "gloves for himself, and another for his wife. Your honour is far
 "above all these things. And so desiring the continuance of your
 "loving favour to the university, and to me your servant, I take
 "my leave.

"OXON, 18 May,
 1622.

Yours ever to be commanded,
 "WILLIAM PIERS."

* PLAYFORD speaks as follows of the musical taste of CHARLES.
 "Nor was his late sacred majesty and blessed martyr king CHARLES
 "the first, behind any of his predecessors in the love and promotion
 "of this science, especially in the service of Almighty God, and
 "with much zeal he would hear reverently performed, and often
 "appointed the service and anthems himself, especially that sharp
 "service composed by Dr. WILLIAM CHILD, being by his know-
 "ledge in music a competent judge therein; and would play his
 "part exactly well on the bass-viol, especially of those incomparable
 "fancies of Mr. COPERARIO to the organ."

Prince HENRY also learnt music, and was a warm patron of musicians. He had fifteen musicians on his household establishment, among whom were doctor BULL, CUTTING*, the famous lutenist, JONES, and ANGELO.

It does not appear, however, that sacred music was so much encouraged at that time as familiar and light airs, particularly such as promoted dancing; an amusement in which JAMES so delighted that he was more anxious for his children to learn it than any thing in the world. There is extant a letter to his sons where he enjoins them to keep up their dancing, even though they should be obliged to whistle and sing to one another for music.

This taste, however, did service to the cause of

* A good player on the lute was at that time considered as a great acquisition. The fame of CUTTING reached to the ears of CHRISTIAN the fourth, king of Denmark; who, having been forsaken by DOULAND whom he had invited to his court after hearing him in England, felt himself so disgraced at being without a good lutenist that he entreated lady ARABELLA STUART, in whose service CUTTING was, before he was retained by HENRY, to spare him that celebrated performer. There were some letters, which are among the Harleian collection, that passed upon the occasion; and, after a great deal of ceremony and consultation, the lute player went to fill up this chasm in CHRISTIAN's court. He, however, liked the situation no better than DOULAND had; for, in a very few years afterwards, we find him in the service of Prince HENRY.

music, for it accustomed the ear to familiar melody, that required only to be methodized by LAWES and PURCELL to stamp it with that character which is known by the term true English music; a species of sound that so effects the mind, and so appeals to the heart, that the meanest hearer, with feeling and sensibility, will be as capable of tasting its beauty and deciding upon its merit as the most learned critic.

By these means public amusements became a matter of singular consequence. The people tired of fruitless controversy, were glad enough to taste so rational a relaxation as the theatre afforded them; and JAMES, by shews and spectacles, hugged himself under an idea that he was hiding his own frivolous folly, ingratiating himself with his nobles, and throwing out a tub to the popular whale.

Thus animosity and mutual recrimination were laughed off and forgotten, through the medium of a comedy or a masque; and, while the people contented themselves with adopting modest yet manly means to support their own privileges, the court was so full of fantastic sports and romantic diversions that it at length actually became like an enchanted castle, whence CHARLES, as a knight, and BUCK-

INGHAM *, as his squire, sallied forth to gain the affections of a Princess at the court of SPAIN; but CHARLES having fallen in love with the Princess HENRIETTA OF FRANCE, whom he afterwards married, and who did so much injury to this country by instilling the principles of popery into her children, they overturned their whole scheme and came home in disgrace.

In the mean time, the imbecility of the king of ENGLAND was at least matched by that of the king of FRANCE. The great HENRY had scarcely been assassinated by RAVILIAC †—which murder, in the

De

* This was the famous BUCKINGHAM who was afterwards assassinated by FELTON. His conduct in Spain was stark madness; and if he had wished to create the eternal enmity of that nation to his royal master, he could not have managed it more adroitly. Besides adventures, intrigues, serenades, duels, and every other insult likely to exasperate so jealous and so grave a people, nothing could satisfy him but making open love to the duchess of OLIVAREZ, and affronting her husband. The match was in consequence broken off, and it was a great proof of the good sense and moderation of the Spanish court that they required no serious retribution.

† The conduct of DAUBIGNY seems to have been very doubtful in this business; who, when confronted by RAVILIAC denied having had any conversation with him. Indeed it appears by many circumstances, particularly the false and contradictory accounts the assassin gave of those things that were found in his pocket, that he was a dupe to the Jesuits, on whose absolution probably he relied;

opinion of many historians, notwithstanding he confessed nothing, was committed either at the instance of some of the nobles, who envied the virtues of HENRY, or by the emissaries of SPAIN—when the duke of SULLY resigned, and the queen regent gave the government of the kingdom into the hands of an Italian chambermaid, whose husband, CONCHINI, soon afterwards created Marshal d'ANCRE, was presently made the victim to her absurd and unbecoming ambition; for, as soon as the king assumed the government, which he did at the age of fourteen, first having married ANNE of AUSTRIA, fearing that, as the power of this man had been derived from one assassination, he might wish to encrease it by another, employed VITRY, who was afterwards made Marshal of FRANCE to dispose of his enemy; he was murdered by hirelings, and his limbs given up to the fury of that populace who were but too justly incensed against him.

In this state was the court of LOUIS; a monarch,

and, for one very strong circumstance to prove that he had accomplices, the Provost of PLUVIERS had openly declared, at six miles distance from PARIS, on the day the murder happened, "This day the king will be either slain, or dangerously wounded." He was on this account sent prisoner to PARIS; but, before he could be examined, he hanged himself.

timid, weak and illiterate, when CHARLES married the princess HENRIETTA, for though RICHELIEU, then bishop of LUÇON, had reconciled the king and his mother, and began to imagine all those advantages for the kingdom which were so well planned and carried into execution afterwards, yet nothing but senseless folly and fantastic intriguing, characterized court manners.

We have seen RICHELIEU a great dramatic patron, and this fancy might, perhaps, have arisen from the necessity, at the time of LOUIS the thirteenth, of giving into some weaknesses in order to get hold of more substantial power. Children cannot be cured entirely by severity. But it is curious that he, who originally merely permitted lighter amusements, should at length grow so inordinately fond of them as to admire them more than any other pursuit.

It had been the fashion to dedicate dramatic pieces; and TROTREL, BERTRAND, FAUCONIER, De la GRANGE, and many others, insignificant writers by the bye, had already chosen their separate protectors, not forgetting BILLARD who wrote a tragedy called *Henri le Grand*, which he dedicated to the queen regent.

Thus did the two courts vie with each other in

dramatic amusements; and this is the moment to prove, which may be done in a few words, that the celebrity of the ENGLISH stage, for celebrity surely is more legitimately due to intrinsic merit than to shew and spectacle, was as decidedly superior to that of FRANCE as an animal is to a vegetable, or a piece of mechanism. One had passive life, the other active. One was wound up and set a going, the other went of itself.

A reperusal of the fifth number of this work will confirm this fact, for we shall there find that, except JOUELLE, GARNIER, and HARDI, the French stage had boasted no name of celebrity before CORNEILLE, whose first play, *Melite*, came out in the very year in which JAMES the first died.

This proves that the emancipation of the English from those mists of opinion which had begun and been encouraged in the reign of ELIZABETH, and had gradually strengthened and been confirmed throughout the life of JAMES, yielded most rationally to the best relaxation that could recreate the fancy, without injury to the mind; and this solid sense, and sound judgment, taught them to cherish in SHAKESPEAR the greatest genius the world has produced; for, in the midst of the squabbles and bickerings during his life, in which there is nothing

arrogant, bold, or aspiring, he possessed that admiration he never courted, and received every testimony of grateful respect from his fellow creatures, whom he had taught and delighted. Not the leader of a party, or the minion of a court, but the advocate of virtue, and the favourite of human nature.

From all these premises I gather this conclusion. That, as the meritorious labours of the drama received very little support but from the people, as the stage had not known the great variety of advantages introduced to it afterwards, as all the collateral arts were in a supine state; and, in short, as it was obliged to stand or fall by its own intrinsic and individual merit; the number of admirable tragedies and comedies that were produced at that time, for these are its true criterion, give dramatic fame, beyond calculation, a decided superiority over every thing it ever boasted, either before, or since.

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.



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